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## KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS

Beautiful and brilliant. Why is she so sexy and arrogant?



## SCHOOL SUNS

The murky world of class education

## DESIGNER BOOZE

What makes lemonade so fashionable

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# Food giant may sue BBC in beef scare

Helpline linked Bovril to BSE

CHARLES ARTHUR  
Science Correspondent

The BBC may face legal action by the giant US corporation which produces Bovril, after a radio helpline advised callers concerned about BSE - mad cow disease - to avoid meat pies, sausages, beefburgers and beef stock.

The company, CPC, will today consider whether to sue the BBC. It said Bovril, which contains extract of boiled bones and carcasses, is produced from cattle raised in Argentina.

Officials at the Meat and Livestock Commission said beef sales had fallen by five per cent last month, compared with last year, and blamed fears that mad cow disease could be transmitted to humans.

Tests have been carried out after the death of a patient in Carlsberg to establish if the cause could be Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), the equivalent of mad cow disease in humans. The Director of Public Health for North Cumbria Health Authority said the patient died in the Cumberland Infirmary recently. The Government insists there is no evidence that BSE can be transmitted from cattle to humans.

Ian Ramsay, managing director of CPC UK Limited, accused the BBC helpline of "complete and utter irresponsibility", and lodged a complaint with the BBC's director-general, John Birt. Mr Ramsay said there was "categorically never" any problem with its product. CPC said that "Bovril beef drink and stock products do not contain any of the materials that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and



Food has banned. The beef product in any case is not of British origin. The BBC did not consult us on this matter."

Junior health minister Angela Browning told the BBC she was "very concerned" about the helpline's advice, which she says was given to members of her department when they phoned in after she appeared on the *You and Yours* programme last Friday. "In one of the answers, one of my officials was told quite categorically that certain meat products were suspect, and indeed, a branded name of a product was also included... I am very concerned that the consumer is being given this sort of advice by the BBC," she said.

The BBC said workers on the helpline, operated by an external company, were told to tell callers there was a debate on BSE, and the advice of the Government's chief medical officer was that beef products were safe, although some scientists believed there might be a risk.

A BBC spokeswoman said: "There was one incident when

one operator mistakenly used a brand name, Bovril, intending to mean the more generic term stock cubes as the kind of beef products some scientists believe may carry some risks." But the spokeswoman added that operators of helplines were always briefed not to use trade names. "We are investigating the situation," she said.

Scientists are increasingly critical of the Government's position. Colin Blakemore, the eminent neurophysiologist at Oxford University, said recent cases of the human equivalent of BSE in Britain "most definitely do not support [Health Secretary] Stephen Dorrell's statement earlier this week that there is 'no conceivable risk' from eating beef." Shaun Healey, a senior research fellow at Leicester University, said: "There is a grand experiment going on in Britain with BSE, with us as the laboratory animals..." Both scientists say they have given up eating beef.

The Meat and Livestock Commission blamed public fears over BSE for part of the slide in beef sales, which follows a few months of marginal growth in the beef market.

Nevertheless, ministers went on the offensive yesterday to bolster beef's public image. Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg said it was "absolutely safe" to eat and that parents should be encouraging children to eat it, while his Welsh counterpart Gwyn Jones, told Parliament: "I am more than content to go on eating beef on a regular basis." He repeated that there was no scientific evidence of a link between BSE and its human equivalent.

Colin Blakemore, page 18

## First blast of winter brings snow chaos



All-white: Cyclists near Hosey Common, at Westerham, Kent, yesterday. Meanwhile, travellers using four wheels instead of two suffered lengthy delays on the roads, as the heavy snow and freezing temperatures combined to create 'nightmare' conditions. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

## Iran backed plot to kill Arafat

PATRICK COCKBURN  
Jerusalem  
SABA HAHM  
Paris

An attempt to kill Yasser Arafat was foiled when the leader of the militant Islamic Jihad organisation was assassinated by Israeli Mossad agents in Malta in October, a source with access to Iranian intelligence has told the Independent.

Fathi Shikaki, the Jihad leader, had just attended a meeting in Tripoli, capital of Libya, with a senior Iranian envoy at which they discussed plans to assassinate the PLO chairman, Islamic Jihad and Iran are both bitterly opposed to the peace agreement

between Israel and the PLO signed by the Palestinian leader. The Iranian emissary who met Shikaki was Hussein Shaikh-Hakhsari, the deputy foreign minister for Arab affairs, says the source. Mr Shaikh-Hakhsari, who is also believed to be deputy head of Iranian intelligence, has been a leading hard-liner in the Iranian government since he helped organise the takeover of the US embassy in Tehran in 1979.

Iranian intelligence believes the PLO gave Mossad, the Israeli foreign security organisation, details of Shikaki's itinerary and false passport, enabling them to arrange his assassination outside his hotel in Valletta on 26 October. Israel has not

claimed responsibility for the killing of Shikaki, but is widely believed to have been behind it. Shikaki checked into room 616 of the Diplomat hotel in Valletta on the morning he was killed. He had shaved off his beard and was wearing a wig, but had no bodyguards. When he returned from a brief shopping trip he was met by two men on a motorcycle, one of whom shot him six times in the head.

Relations between Mr Arafat and Iran, which is the main financial and political supporter of Islamic Jihad, have deteriorated sharply this year. Three months ago Mr Arafat attacked Iran, saying: "No matter how much money you provide to Jihad, you will never succeed in

stopping the peace process." Iran, in turn, has denounced Mr Arafat for supporting the American and Israeli policy of isolating Iran.

Islamic Jihad, one of the most effective guerrilla organisations in the Middle East, was created on the Iranian model. Iran continues to denounce Mr Arafat and the Oslo agreement, expressing particular rage at his offer of condolences after Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli prime minister, was assassinated on 4 November. Iranian intelligence is said to be still targeting Mr Arafat, whose own security has been much increased since the deaths of Shikaki and Rabin.

Murder foiled, page 13



Arafat: Saved by Israeli killing of Jihad chief

## Baggage handler caught with Duchess's gems

DAVID USBORNE  
New York

A baggage handler at New York's Kennedy Airport appeared in court yesterday on theft charges after the Duchess of York's jewellery was found in a garden shed.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation confirmed that both the lost items, a bracelet and a necklace, believed to be worth £250,000 and given to the Duchess by the Queen as a wedding present, had been retrieved. Five small diamonds were found missing from the necklace, however.

Gilbert Terrero, 19, an employee of Hudson General company, the baggage handling agent for British Airways at Kennedy Airport, was charged with "theft from an interstate shipment". He could face a maximum 10 years in jail.

Mr Terrero led investigators to the jewels after being questioned on Tuesday both by BA and FBI security agents. He took them first to his home in Queens, New York, where the damaged necklace had been hidden in an outdoor shed. The bracelet was later found in his locker at the airport.

The jewellery had been packed inside a small zip-up bag which, according to BA officials, the Duchess had initially taken on board Concorde as carry-on baggage for her flight to London on Monday evening. She then changed her mind and gave it to her lady-in-waiting, Jane Dunn-Butler, who was travelling on a subsonic flight to Heathrow 30 minutes later. Miss Dunn-Butler apparently checked the bag into her plane's hold.

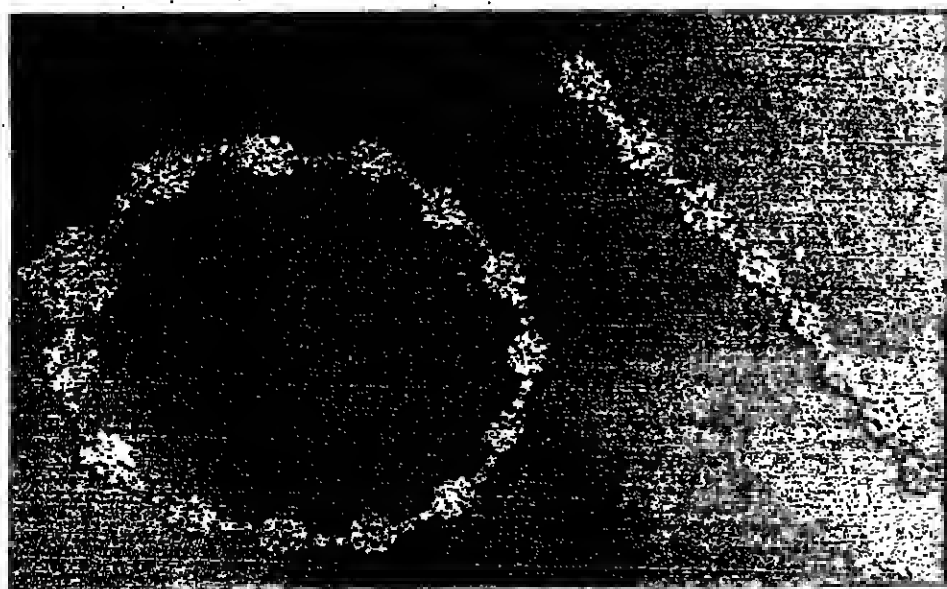
Officials at both BA and the FBI expressed surprise at the

way the bag had been passed around and then stowed. "I would not put something of that value in the hold," suggested James Kalstrom, an assistant director with the FBI. John Lampl, New York spokesman for BA, concurred: "Knowing the kind of value involved, it probably should have been taken on as carry-on baggage."

Once checked in by the lady-in-waiting, the small bag was the last to enter the jumbo-jet's hold before departure. Mr Lampl said it posed an easy temptation, because it was a zip-up bag without any lock.

The Hudson Company, he added, would have to "look very carefully" about who it was hiring if it expected to keep its contract with the airline.

The FBI said it was continuing the search for the missing five diamonds and was confident they would be found.



The jewellery, believed to be worth £250,000, after it was found in a garden shed

## IN BRIEF

### 999 only in Essex

Industrial action by firefighters on Merseyside is poised to spread to the South-east after union members in Essex voted to ban all but emergency calls on two days. Page 2

### Profit from disabled

Six banks running a car-leasing company for a disabled charity have allegedly made "unjustified" profits. Page 2

### Galileo mission

Scientists will learn tonight whether the Galileo space mission to Jupiter has completed the most perilous stage of its 2.3 billion-mile journey. Page 10

## 150 accountants face ruin over clanger

JOHN WILLCOCK  
Financial Correspondent

Nearly 150 chartered accountants face personal bankruptcy following a record damages award in the High Court yesterday worth £105m including interest and costs.

Each of the partners in Binder Hamlyn affected by the judgment are personally liable for around a quarter of a million pounds each. Binder said yesterday it will "vigorously appeal against the award".

ADT, an electronic security company, won the damages

against Binder - believed to be the biggest ever in the UK - after a judge criticised crucial information the firm volunteered during a takeover bid five years ago.

Jonathan Sumption, QC, representing Binder's, told Mr Justice May that his client's insurance cover fell short of the total £105m damages and interest by £34m. Legal sources said this would mean that all the partners, had worked at Binder's since 1990, when the deal took place, were now liable for the shortfall.

ADT first brought the claim in August 1992. Sources close to the firm said that the total number of partners liable was unclear because of retirements and deaths, but was probably between 130 and 150.

Most of Binder's was bought last year by giant US rival Arthur Andersen but legal sources said that it would not be liable.

However, the award is likely to please Michael Ashcroft, the entrepreneur who built ADT in the 1980s through a series of audacious acquisitions which alienated the City.

Mr Sumption successfully applied to the judge for a hearing to ask for a stay of settlement until an appeal is heard. Legal sources expect any appeal to take up to a year.

Binder's had signed off an audit for in October 1989 for Britannia Securities Group, target of a takeover bid, which confirmed to ADT that Binder's stood by the audit. ADT then spent £105m buying Britannia. The judge found that the accountants had been negligent in their audit of the company and its subsidiaries and it was worth only £40m. He awarded bidder

ADT the difference between the purchase and true values.

Binder's worked for BSG - not ADT the electronic security company seeking to buy out the shares. The judge found the firm had assumed responsibility to ADT at a business meeting in January 1990.

Running for cover, page 25



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We could have named it after a monk's habit but the RSPCA would have been onto us like a shot.



THE SERIOUS BEER WITH THE SILLY NAME.

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# news

## Banks accused of profiteering from the disabled

Six high street banks running a £1.2bn car leasing company for a disabled charity have made "unjustified" profits, according to a former deputy chairman of the company.

Motability Finance Ltd, which leases 80,000 cars a year by using disabled people's £32.65 a week mobility allowance, has twice landed windfall profits but it does not fully explain how much was made or where the money went.

The leasing company was set up by the charity, Motability, to capitalise on bulk discounts. It is the largest car leasing company in the world, but it is currently being investigated by the National Audit Office following claims that it has become secretive, refusing

Charity concerned over financial aspects of car leasing. **Steve Boggan reports**

to publish the accounts of a number of associated partnership subsidiaries controlled by Barclays, NatWest, Midland, Lloyds, the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Bank of Scotland.

Last night, Alan Simpson, Labour MP for Nottingham South, tabled 16 parliamentary questions for Peter Lilley, the Secretary of State for Social Security, demanding information on the finance company.

Since its creation in 1977, some governors of Motability (the charity) have complained that the workings of Motability Finance Ltd (MFL, the finance company) have been

kept secret even from them. However, internal correspondence obtained by the *Independent* reveals that there has been a boardroom split within MFL over who should handle the charity's money.

Alan Outten, a former deputy chairman of MFL and one of its directors for 15 years, wrote to Simon Willis, a former director of Motability, in June 1993 arguing that the charity should take over MFL.

Mr Outten, 62, died last Saturday after a battle against cancer. He voiced his concern over MFL, of which he was vice-chairman for eight years, in a

letter in 1993 in which he wrote: "For the last year or so, I have been increasingly convinced that we should look at the possibility of the charity taking over MFL... All the costs and expenses of MFL are recovered in the pricing of the initial rentals... All the computer systems, premises, staff salaries and pension contributions, operating costs, consultancy and professional fees etc are and have always been paid for by the customers [disabled people]."

"Accordingly, the banks have no investment in MFL and a valid case could be made for saying that the charity, acting on

behalf of the disabled, has paid for and therefore effectively owns MFL."

MFL receives an element of customers' Disability Living Allowance directly from the Department of Social Security, ensuring it was free of bad debts.

Mr Simpson said: "The charity does a fine job but the finance company behind it represents a monopoly providing risk-free profits for a group of banks instead of pushing costs down further for the disabled."

"It is extremely doubtful to me whether the banks require such a large reserve against in-

creases in tax rates," he said. The banks were hedging against a possible increase in corporation tax from 33 per cent to 50 per cent, which never occurred.

Twice, he said, the banks made windfall profits from running MFL, once when corporation taxes were lowered and once when, in 1988, they took out fixed-interest loans shortly before interest rates increased. Proceeds went towards a new charity, called the Motability Tenth Anniversary Trust Fund Ltd. That currently stands at about £40m.

In another letter, dated 17 March 1993, to David Maxwell

of KPMG Peat Marwick, formerly the charity's auditors, Mr Outten criticised the £40m projected contingency fund.

Gerry Ascher, head of audit at KPMG Peat Marwick and vice chairman of Motability, said Mr Outten's proposals had been considered but rejected because it would have been inappropriate for the governors of a charity to bear responsibility for £1.2bn of liabilities.

Reported profits of £53m on the leasing side of the business, he said, failed to take into account tax and interest payments which brought true profits for the banks to just £6m for 1993 and £8.8m for 1994.

He said Motability's latest accounts, due in three weeks, would be more transparent.

Union warning: Merseyside dispute set to spread over proposal to close four stations and shed 645 posts

## Firefighters threaten to strike over job cuts

**BARRIE CLEMENT**  
Labour Editor

Signs emerged yesterday that the four-month campaign of industrial action by firefighters on Merseyside in protest at spending cuts is poised to spread to the south-east of England.

The Fire Brigades Union in Essex has voted to ban all but emergency calls on 15 and 16 December, and the union's regional council for London yesterday recommended strike action over proposals to slim down the service in the capital.

Merseyside firefighters are to press their union's executive next Thursday to call an emergency national conference to discuss the situation in the Liverpool area and to urge the national leadership to back national action.

The Local Government Management Board, which negotiates nationally with the FBU, was yesterday still assessing the full implications of renewed pressure on council finances, but it was clear that fire brigades throughout the country would be faced with cutbacks.

Tomorrow, the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority will

be discussing a recommendation that the service should lose 645 posts over the next 25 months — nearly a tenth of the workforce. The four fire stations under threat of closure are Shooters Hill and Downham in south-east London and Manchester Square and Barbican in the centre of the capital.

The plan was drawn up by Brian Robinson, chief officer of the London brigade, who believes the cutbacks can be achieved over the next two years through "natural wastage" and a freeze on recruitment.

Jimmy Fitzpatrick, FBU executive member for London, said the regional committee would attempt to fight the proposals by lobbying politicians and enlisting the aid of community organisations, but ultimately believed the future of the brigade could depend on members' willingness to take industrial action.

"Emergency service workers do not take strike action lightly. It is very much the last resort," he said, however, that the cuts envisaged by Mr Robinson were "drastic". He believed the response times of fire engines would inevitably deteriorate because of the closure



Uncertain future: Firefighters at Shooters Hill, south-east London, one of four stations threatened with closure

Photograph: Edward Webb

of stations. "In the fire service seconds can mean the difference between life and death. Management is taking a gamble."

Mr Fitzpatrick said that if London took action it would be co-ordinated with Merseyside which has already staged a total of nine 9-hour strikes

and twelve 24-hour stoppages. Mike Lawson, Merseyside representative on the FBU executive, believes there is considerable support around the country for national action in protest at cutbacks.

The union has already threatened to take national industrial

action if there are any compulsory redundancies, but many FBU branches are concerned about the erosion of the service through natural wastage.

Ken Cameron, general secretary of the union, said that last year almost 200 posts disappeared in England and Wales

and at least the same number of jobs would be lost in the coming year. "We fear that the fire service will only be able to meet its statutory obligations by lowering standards of fire cover which inevitably puts the public at risk. Every appliance taken off the run makes the

country a more dangerous place," he said.

Some seasoned observers believe, however, that the prophecies of swinging jobs cuts are routine at this time of the year when the union is attempting to maximise the amount of money devoted to the service.

## PVC link to cot death likely to be rejected

**GLENDA COOPER**

Independent experts are expected to reject any connection between cot deaths and PVC mattresses in a report released tomorrow.

The review was ordered by the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Kenneth Calman, after Central TV's *The Cook Report* claimed that chemicals in mattresses could emit toxic gases.

The study will be published in this week's edition of the *Lancet*, the medical journal, and cost more than £100,000 to complete. However, the experts will report that they could find no evidence to back the programme's theory, according to yesterday's *Financial Times*.

*The Cook Report* broadcast in November 1994 alleged that deterioration of not mattress material led to the emission of toxic gases which could cause sudden infant death. It said that bed-wetting released a fungal reaction in phosphorus and antimony, chemicals used by some manufacturers to make mattresses flame-retardant.

As a result Boots and other retailers withdrew mattresses from sale and thousands of parents contacted a special phone line.

Manufacturers were hit hard, including Cassidy Brothers of Blackpool, who have a £30,000 fall in pre-tax profits on the effects of the programme.

Thomas Cassidy, the chairman of the company, said: "We were deluged with calls from members of the public. It went on for weeks. Sales immediately went down and several small companies went out of business."

In March research carried out by the Scottish Cot Death Trust found that cot-death infants had lower levels of antimony in their bodies than infants who had died of other causes. "But by then the damage was done," said Mr Cassidy.

Of around 600,000 births each year there were 912 deaths in 1991 and 456 in 1992, a reduction of almost a half. The dramatic drop followed the Government's "Back to Sleep" campaign launched by the television personality, Anne Diamond, in December 1991. It advised parents to lay babies on their backs rather than stomachs. However, 10 babies still die from cot deaths every week.

Miss Diamond, whose son was a victim of cot death four years ago, was widely credited with galvanising authority into



Roger Cook. Report claimed PVC could emit toxic gases

action. She said her son's mattress had been tested for the Cook report and it had high levels of antimony.

The idea that contamination of mattresses was linked to cot deaths was first mooted in the late 1980s when Barry Richardson, a consultant scientist specialising in deterioration of materials, discovered that industrial PVC was used for babies' mattresses.

A spokeswoman for *The Cook Report* said that the programme stood by its claims but until we have seen the interim report it would be inappropriate to comment.

A survey earlier this year revealed that a baby whose mother and father smokes is five times more likely to be a cot death victim than one in a non-smoking home.

And last year scientists from Middlesex University said regional variations in infant deaths could be linked to waterlogged soils which cause breathing problems.

## Tories' school claim backfires

**JOHN RENTOUL**  
and **FRAN ABRAMS**

The Conservatives' campaign to undermine Tony Blair over an opt-out school ballot in his constituency blew up in their faces yesterday when the chairman of the governors of the Education department's decision to "stick their ear in".

Mr Farrar, headteacher of Hurworth school in Mr Blair's Sedgefield constituency, who had campaigned unsuccessfully for parents to vote to adopt grant-maintained status, said he will not co-operate with

the investigation. He told the *Newcastle Journal*: "We cannot be used in this way. Nobody who is keeping it rolling along is not helping. We want to be left alone. It's our school."

Derek Mason, the Tory councillor who is chairman of the governors of school outside Darlington, also attacked the Education department's decision to "stick their ear in". He told the *Independent*: "We want to draw a line under the ballot, heal all the wounds and build some bridges."

Parents at the Hurworth school in Mr Blair's Sedgefield constituency voted by 63 to 37 per cent this week not to opt out

of Durham County Council's control, after the head alleged the local Labour Party misled and intimidated them.

Mrs Shephard's officials yesterday "called for information" from Durham council, although a department spokeswoman said she was "not aware of specific complaints, but there has been quite a bit of coverage". Articles repeating claims of intimidation appeared in the *Sunday Express* and yesterday's *Daily Telegraph*.

Mr Farrar, who launched the campaign for the school to opt out when he became headmaster three months ago, claimed Labour activists, teacher unions

and Durham council had spread misinformation. He claimed a party member had even referred to him on the doorstep of one parent as a "pillock".

But yesterday he said: "The parents have decided and I'm happy about that. Now I just want to get on with my job of providing a quality education for the children."

David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, claimed Mrs Shephard's officials were "embarrassed" by the decision to investigate, and the fact that Education department press releases "are now being faxed around by Conservative Central Office".

## New drug could halt flu epidemics

A revolutionary new drug is being tested which could help to eliminate flu epidemics, it emerged yesterday.

The drug, known by the code GG-167, does not kill the virus but stops it spreading around the body. This should make it easier for the body's immune system to mop up the infection before it can take hold.

The pharmaceutical giant Glaxo has embarked on the second of three trials being held to test the drug, and establish how best to administer it. The company's chief executive, Richard Sykes, is reported to have given the project top

priority. Trials were delayed last year because there were not enough flu patients to act as guinea-pigs.

The initial trial, launched in 1993 and involving 160 volunteers, showed that flu patients who took GG-167 recovered more quickly than those who did not. Glaxo has started recruiting 1,500 flu volunteers in the US and Europe, including the UK, for a much bigger trial.

The company expects to apply for a licence to market the drug in about a year's time. If approved, GG-167 may be on sale from about 1998.

Flu kills an average 3,000 to

4,000 people in Britain each winter, mostly affecting the elderly, and people with respiratory problems or weak immune systems.

A Glaxo spokesman, Martin Sutton, said: "It is too early to really tell if this drug can save lives... It looks promising, but we have to complete the clinical trials and find out which people would be most appropriate to benefit from it."

The drug was developed using powerful computer programmes which can produce graphics showing the structure of complex molecules in 3-D. GG-167 works by blocking the

action of an enzyme called neuraminidase, which allows the virus to escape from infected cells and spread throughout the body. Scientists designed new molecules which bind to the enzyme and jam it, in the same way that a key jams in a lock.

The drug was first discovered by an Australian scientist and has been developed, with financial backing from Glaxo, by the small Australian company, Biota.

An American team of scientists based at Alabama University is reported to be working along similar lines, but has not progressed as far.

### IN BRIEF

#### Loyalist politician guilty in gun case

Three men, including a leading loyalist politician, were found guilty yesterday of conspiring to run guns to the outlawed Ulster Volunteer Force.

The High Court in Glasgow was told that six men were arrested after police seized a semi-automatic pistol and a machine-gun being transported from Aldrie to Liverpool.

Lindsay Robb, 28, of the Progressive Unionist Party, was found guilty of criminal conspiracy to further the purposes of the UVF. John Johnston, 49, from Falkirk, and William McArthur, 41, from Bonnybridge, both central Scotland, were also found guilty of conspiracy. Three others were acquitted of conspiracy but found guilty on lesser charges involving weapons.

Sentence was adjourned for two weeks.

#### Deportation delay

The Nigerian asylum-seeker at the centre of a political row over Conservative Central Office involvement in his planned deportation at the weekend has been allowed an extra two weeks to prepare a more detailed case. Abiodun Igbindu, 25, a member of an opposition group, says he has been arrested more than 10 times and tortured and fears for his life should he be returned.

#### West appeal

Rosemary West is to lodge her appeal against her conviction on 10 charges of murder with the Court of Appeal within the next few days, her solicitor said. She will challenge the admissibility of key evidence in her trial at Winchester Crown Court, argue that some charges should have been heard separately and ask that part of the judge's summing-up should be reviewed.

#### Virgin victory

The Advertising Standards Authority has ordered PepsiCo International to change the way it advertises its Pepsi Challenge which claims its cola tastes the best after a complaint from Richard Branson, whose Virgin group recently launched its own cola brand.

#### Royal price

A painting which has belonged to the royal families of Britain, France and Spain was sold for more than £5m. *The Finding of Moses*, painted for Charles I by his court painter Orazio Gentileschi in 1633-34, was bought at Sotheby's by an anonymous private collector.

#### Tagging drive

Magistrates are being issued with guidelines to encourage them to make more use of electronic tagging and save Home Office plans from disaster. In nearly six months only 17 out of a possible 5,000 offenders have been tagged.

#### Prize journalism

Three journalists have won awards for their work with the *Independent* and the *Independent on Sunday*. In the Medical Journalists' Association awards for 1995, sponsored by Norwich Union Healthcare, Celia Hall, former Medical Editor of the *Independent*, was runner-up in the main category for her exclusive account of how haemophiliacs became infected with Hepatitis C from blood transfusions. Steve Connor, former Science Correspondent of the *Independent*, received a commendation for revealing the world's "first" AIDS case — a Manchester man who died in 1959 — was false. Annabel Ferriman, a freelance contributor to the *Independent on Sunday*, was commended for a feature on stress.

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# GRRR AHA MMM'S PORT

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# Snowbound England: Four die as wintry blast causes danger for motorists and leaves the south at a standstill

## Icy 'nightmare' brings trail of chaos

PETER VICTOR

Drivers were warned to brace themselves for more winter tailbacks today, as snow and ice continues to leave a trail of chaos across England. Four people are thought to have died after skidding out of control and scores of motorists spent nearly 24 hours trapped in an M25 service station after a section of the motorway was cut off in icy blizzards.

Motoring organisations spoke of "nightmare" conditions on snowbound and icy roads. The Siberian blast sweeping much of the country is expected to last until the weekend, when the frosts will begin to thaw.

Worst affected yesterday were Kent and Surrey, with the M25 severely hit by snow on a stretch straddling both counties between junctions five and six. The section was closed in-

### Weather outlook

Devon, Dorset, Wiltshire and Avon can expect snow today. But the air flow will become more southerly by Friday and a thaw is expected to set in by the weekend.

Intermittently throughout the morning as police tried to avoid a recurrence of Tuesday night's 37-mile logjam from mid-Surrey to the Dartford tunnel.

Even gritting lorries were stuck in the snow as they tried to dodge their way along carriageways littered with abandoned cars, the RAC said.

In Nottinghamshire, police were investigating whether snow was partly responsible for a crash in which a father and his two children died. Glyn Palmer, 37, was driving his Nissan Micra car with his 10-year-old son, Darren, in the front seat and his daughter, Paula-Marie, eight, in the back seat when they were in a crash with an overloaded lorry on the A607 near Orton, Nottinghamshire.

One woman driver died and her husband was seriously injured when their car skidded off the A40 trunk road at Carmarthen and crashed into road signs in the early hours.

Hundreds of trapped travellers spent nearly 24 hours at Clacket Lane Service Station, on the M25. And despite the massive police and rescue ser-



Stranded: While motorists sit gridlocked on the M25, a lorry lies abandoned on the hard shoulder of the closed anti-clockwise carriageway

Photograph: Steve Roigate

vice operation to clear the orbital between Caterham, Surrey (Junction 6) and Sevenoaks, Kent (Junction 5), many motorists were still stuck yesterday. An RAC spokesman said: "There are still terrible problems. There is heavy snow falling in the area and conditions are worsening. We are ex-

pecting severe falls across the south-east and we are calling in extra staff in to cope."

Rayner Peet of the AA said: "Traffic is a nightmare at the moment. Our advice is to try and stagger journeys, take extra time and speak to your boss nicely to allow you to leave work a little bit earlier." Drivers

should also keep extra warm clothing and a blanket in the car and take a vacuum flask.

A London Weather Centre spokesman warned more snow was forecast for last night in the south-eastern quarter of Britain, particularly East Anglia, Essex and Kent. A fresh band of snow is expected to arrive

from the Continent and spread westwards to central counties of England. Parts of Norfolk and Suffolk can expect a covering of three to four centimetres, he said.

Today the wind is expected to shift to a more south-easterly direction and southern counties, especially Devon, Dorset, Wil-

shire and Avon, can expect snow. But the air flow would become more southerly by Friday and a thaw was expected to set in by the weekend.

For the second day running yesterday bookmakers slashed odds against a white Christmas. Ladbrokes cut their price to 2-1 after a rush of bets on yes-

terday morning's quoted odds of 5-1. Spokesman Paul Austin said: "As soon as our customers can't feel their fingers and toes they start betting heavily on a white Christmas."

William Hill cut their odds from 7-1 to 5-1 and are bracing themselves for a £100,000 payout if it snows on December 25.

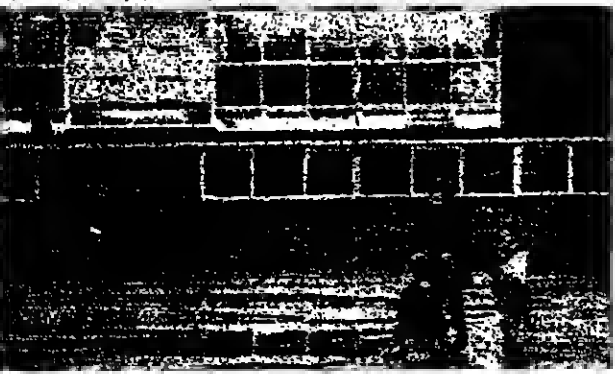
## Experts try to quell fears over rising meningitis toll

JAMES CUSICK

Infectious diseases experts yesterday told anxious parents not to panic over the number of meningitis cases in recent months, which may be evidence of an "early winter peak" of the seasonal disease.

Yesterday the confirmation of further meningitis cases in Cleveland and Nottinghamshire were likely to add to parents' increasing anxiety over their children's health. However, the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre, part of the Public Health Laboratory, said panic was unwarranted and that case levels "were within their expectations" for this time of the year.

A spokeswoman for the PHL said: "We anticipate recording some 2,000 cases each year. That equates to six cases every day." The centre said figures for the first 10 months of the year were roughly in the expected ranges over the last five years. Only a marginal increase in October's figures indicated the disease, most common in winter months, may have peaked ahead of the high non-



Pupils are being kept away from Pallister Park School

usually expected in January or February.

More cases of meningitis—to add to those recently reported in Lincolnshire, West Yorkshire, Leeds, Glasgow and London—were confirmed yesterday.

It was disclosed that a second youngster had died, and six others were ill, in the latest additions to the cluster of cases to hit the north-east.

Four-year-old Reece McCawill, a pupil at Pallister Park Primary School in Middlesbrough, Cleveland, died last Friday. The second victim is a

16-year-old from County Durham.

Three other confirmed cases have also been recorded in the same county. The patients include a two-year-old from Peterlee and a four-year-old from Crook who attends a local nursery.

A pupil from Parkview Comprehensive, and a 17-year-old student attending New College, Durham, are two confirmed cases from Chester-le-Street. A 12-year-old from Bishopston near Darlington is also one of the new cases.

Cleveland Education Department is now hoping that their public reassurances, given after the death of Reece McCawill, will stop pupils being kept away from school by worried parents.

In north Nottinghamshire, a 16-year-old girl from Rufford School, Edwinstowe, has been diagnosed as suffering from meningitis. A five-year-old from Mansfield, has already received treatment for the disease.

Simon Kroll, Professor of Paediatrics at St Mary's Hospital, London, one of the UK's leading centres for the study of meningococcal disease, said: "Using the word 'outbreak' to describe what we are seeing is making a mistake. It is imprecise and has emotional overtones."

Most of the population acquire some immunity to the disease during childhood. However, in young children there is an increased risk. Adolescents also experience a slightly increased risk. The disease is classified as "seasonal" with normal peaks expected in the winter. Prof Kroll said "clusters" of the disease were part of its normal behaviour.

MARIANNE MACDONALD  
Media Correspondent

Andrew Neil, the combative former editor of the *Sunday Times*, has landed a major BBC chat show a year after his planned American prime time programme failed to materialise.

Uniquely, *The Andrew Neil Show* will be broadcast live both on BBC2 and on BBC World, the BBC's international information channel, which is said to be available in 49 million homes in 111 countries.

The show will start at 2.10pm on BBC2, when Mr Neil will interview a person involved in the big story of the day. From 2.30pm it will also go out on BBC World, with an interview of more global interest.

Viewers will be encouraged to "interact" with the show by sending in questions by e-mail, fax, phone or on the Internet. These will flash up on a computer in front of Mr Neil.

The former editor, who is presenting a second series of *Is This Your Life?* on Channel 4, said he was delighted to have clinched the show to run three times a week from 9 January. But he emphasised: "This is not

a political show. We have to cover everything. I always see things in *Sunday Times* section terms, and I will cover everything from the style section to the news review."

He said the interviewees he would have asked to appear on the show yesterday were Jane Dunn-Butler, the luckless lady-in-waiting who mislaid the Duchess of York's diamonds; Julia Somerville, who has been cleared of wrongdoing over the photographs of her seven-year-

old daughter; and the Duchess of York. For the global interview slot he would be looking for figures such as Jacques Chirac, the French president, James Hewitt, the former lover of the Princess of Wales, and Henry Kissinger.

Although the show is on daytime television, the 13-week contract is a prestigious one for Mr Neil, who has become a familiar face on television. Last Sunday he got the upper hand of Mrs Merton on her show, but in August he was criticised in a *Times* review of *Is This Your Life?* for over-aggression: "Cackling, Neil trunks the band while flimsy celebrities such as Olivia Newton-John squeal, creak and dismember," it said.

Neil left Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation in November last year after a plan for him to front a high-profile current affairs show on Fox, the US national television network, broke down. Since then he has pursued a lucrative career as a freelance writer and broadcaster. He is also leading a consortium which has bid around £250m for the Express newspaper group, although it seems unlikely that its owner, Lord Stevens, will wish to sell.



Andrew Neil: BBC2 show to be broadcast worldwide

## Global village prepares to welcome Andrew Neil

## Tory MP 'lied to cover up his gay affair'

REBECCA FOWLER

David Ashby, the Tory MP, was described as "a hypocrite, a liar and a homosexual" yesterday, in his libel action against the *Sunday Times* and Andrew Neil, the former editor, in which he denies he had an affair with another man.

In his opening remarks, Richard Hartley QC for the *Sunday Times* said that although there was no problem with a man being presented as gay in the 1990s, Mr Ashby had promoted himself as a married man for his career as an MP and lied about his sexuality.

Mr Ashby, 55, separated from Silvana Ashby, 53, his Italian wife, after what he described as 28 "tempestuous" years of marriage in 1993. He was accused of leaving her to live close to another man in South-west London.

"You have to consider whether people do have mid-life crises, and have to say to their wives 'I now find my homosexual leanings are too much,'" Mr Hartley said to the jury.

Mr Ashby was accused of having homosexual relations with his neighbour, Dr Ciaran Kilduff, 32. Mr Ashby bought the flat above Dr Kilduff's in Putney after his separation.

Although the two men admit they shared a double bed during a trip to the Chateau Tilque hotel in northern France in January 1994, they denied they were physically intimate. They said it was done to reduce the cost of their trip.

Mr Hartley said the two men slept in the same bed, despite the fact that the hotel had 33 vacant rooms. A twin-bedded room was available at the same price, also in the old part of the hotel, which Mr Ashby preferred.

Although the *Sunday Times* accepts Mr Ashby did not share a bed with a man on another trip to Goa, in India, as it alleged in an article on 16 January 1994, it alleges Mr Ashby is a homosexual and denies libel.

Mrs Ashby, who has repeatedly accused her husband of being gay, did not give evidence yesterday because she was ill.

Andrew Alderson, a senior *Sunday Times* journalist, who wrote two articles on Mr Ashby, told the libel jury that the paper was first alerted to his domestic problems when it received anonymous phone calls alleging he had left his wife to be close to another man. Mr Alderson visited Mrs Ashby in her South-west London home.

"I asked her if her marriage was over," Mr Alderson said. "She said 'yes'. I said 'I understand it was fairly unusual circumstances for his leaving'. She said 'yes' and invited me in to her home for a lengthy conversation."

Mr Alderson said Mrs Ashby told him her husband was having an affair with Dr Kilduff, whom the paper never named. The jury was also played a taped interview with Robert Sheridan, the homosexual partner of Brian Ashby, Mr Ashby's older brother, who lived in Kentucky openly as a homosexual before his recent death from a heart condition.

Mr Sheridan painted a bleak picture of the Ashby family, apparently torn apart by greed over the family business.

When Mr Sheridan, Brian's partner for 25 years, was asked if Mr Ashby was a homosexual he did not know.

"Englishmen are usually very refined, they have a little bit more of a gentle touch to them," he said. "It wouldn't surprise me if every Englishman was gay."

The case continues.

Cellnet and Vodafone think Saturday should be peak rate on their business tariffs,

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Another reason why, on average, Orange users save £20 every month.







# Cancer treatment blamed for injuries

LIZ HUNT  
Health Editor

Hundreds of breast cancer patients permanently damaged by radiation treatment have received a major boost to their claims for compensation from the Government.

The women, left with severe pain and paralysis of an arm due to nerve damage, learned that their injuries were due to excessive doses of radiation, inappropriately delivered during treatment.

A report from the Royal College of Radiologists has confirmed that the most likely explanation for the condition, known as brachial plexus neuropathy (BPN), was the physical movement of patients between radiotherapy treatment to the breast and radio-

therapy to the lymph nodes in the lower neck and armpit. High doses were a secondary cause.

Dr Margaret Spittle, Dean of the Faculty of Clinical Oncology at the College, said that as a result, some areas of the body overlying nerves got higher doses of radiation than expected.

"Women may have been initially lying down with their head on a pillow for the first doses, and may have then been moved to a sitting up position for the dose to the lymph area, to better accommodate the equipment," she said.

Lady Audrey Ironside, founder and president of Rage (Radiation Action Group Exposure), a pressure group set up in 1991 to campaign against the risks of radiation treatment, welcomed the report yesterday.

She was treated for breast cancer at the Royal Marsden Hospital, London, in 1980 at the age of 50. Two years later she began suffering pain and paralysis in her left arm. Now she is in constant pain, and bone tissue in her collar bone and some of her ribs has been destroyed.

"The report confirms the worst fears of several hundred women. We all suspected the cause. This is enormously helpful to our quest for compensation from the Government," Lady Ironside said.

Two leading radiologists reviewed the records of 126 members of Rage Breast (for women who have been treated for breast cancer), and BPN due to radiotherapy was found in 48 women treated between 1980 and 1993 at 15 of 51 cancer centres in England and Wales

where Rage members had been treated. A higher incidence of BPN was linked with some centres than others.

The report found that 41 of the cases occurred prior to 1987, suggesting that the incidence of BPN is declining as practice has changed. BPN is now rare, Dr Spittle said.

The report recommends that patients should be treated with radiation in a fixed position, that closer attention should be given to doses received by the tissues in the lower neck and armpit and that lymph nodes should continue to be treated selectively and not routinely as in the past. It says that every cancer centre should have a formal written procedure for treatment, and calls for clinical trials to determine the optimum radiotherapy regime.

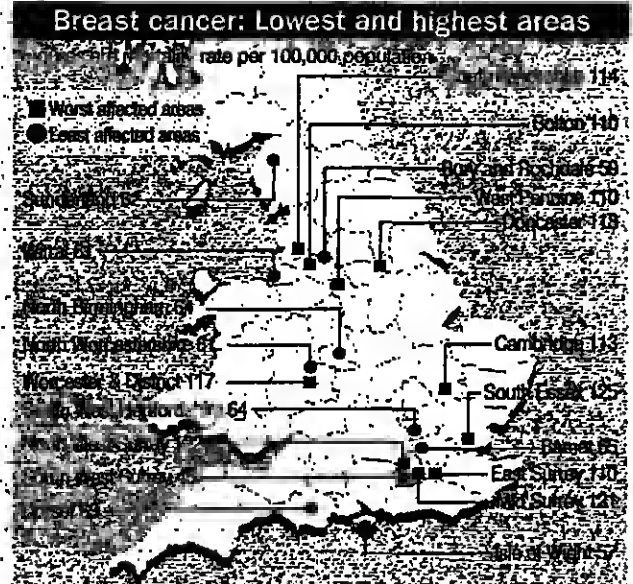
## Survival 'is lottery' for women

GLENDIA COOPER

Women are victims of a "shameful" health lottery with 60 per cent of district health authorities likely to fail the Government's targets for reducing breast cancer deaths by 2000, the Labour Party claimed yesterday.

Variations in mortality rates between districts can differ by as much as 170 per cent and three out of eight regional health authorities are also unlikely to meet the Government's target of a 25 per cent reduction in breast cancer deaths between 1990 and 2000.

Breast cancer killed almost 14,000 women in the UK in 1992. It is responsible for about 20 per cent of cancer deaths and 5 per cent of all deaths in women. In an area of average breast cancer mortality, the disease will affect 1 in every 1,163 of the population, the report showed. But in the worst area this rises to 1 in 800 and in the best area it decreases to 1 in 2,222. The average rate of



mortality was 86 per 100,000 population. A total of 55 district health authorities fall on or above the average. The other 57 fall below.

South Essex was identified as the English authority with the highest mortality rate - 125 deaths per 100,000 population. At the other end of the scale, South West Surrey, with the lowest rate, had 43 deaths per

100,000 - a difference of 170 per cent. Three authorities - South Essex, North West Surrey, and Mid Surrey - had death rates almost 50 per cent higher than average, it was claimed.

According to Labour's figures, the five district health authorities with the worst record are: South Essex (125 deaths per 100,000 population), North West Surrey (122), Mid Surrey (121), Doncaster (118), Worcester and District (117). Areas with the best records include South West Surrey, Isle of Wight, Bury and Rochdale, North Worcestershire and the Wirral.

Of the 112 authorities, 45 were on course to meet the Government's target of a 25 per cent reduction and 13 were making progress. But 54 looked likely to miss the target.

Labour said its findings flew in the face of government claims about breast cancer, it quoted from a *Health of the Nation* report which said there was "relatively little variation" in mortality around the England and Wales average.

## A new ballet waits in the wings



On their toes: The Royal Ballet dancers Stuart Cassidy, Deborah Bull and Darcey Bussell at rehearsals for *Mr Worldly Wise*, by the American choreographer Twyla Tharp, which has its world premiere at Covent Garden on Saturday. Tickets have been cut from £65 to £27.50 and the cheapest are just £2. Photograph: Lawrie Lewis

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REALLY MY STRONG POINT.

Trivial Pursuit

it takes all sorts



## news

# Examiners limit calculator use in school maths tests

JUDITH JUDD  
Education Editor

Government exam advisers yesterday announced a clamp-down on the use of calculators in national tests because of fears that they are lowering standards.

From next year calculators will be barred from one of two maths papers in tests for 600,000 11-year-olds. Officials are also considering banning them from one of the maths papers taken by 14-year-olds.

In maths, say reports on this year's tests, 14-year-olds did well at simple mental arithmetic and using simple fractions and percentages. However, they had difficulty with two-digit divisions without calculators and with questions needing mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.

One in 10 could not multiply 840 by 63 and one in five could not divide 1.24 metres by 14 centimetres.

Dr Nick Tate, chief executive

of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority which published the reports, said: "There are vital parts of maths which can only be taught without ready access to calculators. The move to calculator-free papers will signal more strongly to schools the importance of thinking very carefully indeed about the way they use calculators. The overuse of calculators can be damaging."

At present pupils are allowed calculators in all maths papers and those questions in which calculators must not be used are indicated.

Dr Tate said pupils found that confusing. It was also difficult to police when calculators were being used.

The authority has commissioned an international survey to examine how calculators are used in other countries. A report from Her Majesty's Inspectors suggested recently that calculators are used much more widely in British primary schools than abroad.

The authority's reports on national curriculum testing for more than 2 million children say standards of reading and writing among seven-year-olds are rising while those in maths remain much the same. Standards in English, maths and science for 14-year-olds are about the same as last year. Full details will not be known until the new year.

Boys scored higher than girls on the non-fiction test and girls did better than boys on story-reading.

Dr Tate said that the tests had been a success. The reports acknowledge that there were problems with marking the 14-year-old English tests with hundreds of able pupils being given marks that were too low. The training and supervision of markers will be improved this year.

After allegations of cheating in the 11-year-olds' tests, schools will next year be forbidden from opening test papers in advance.



Holy image: 'The Finding of Moses' by the Italian old master, Orazio Gentileschi, which sold for £5m at Sotheby's in London yesterday. The oil painting, which was commissioned by Charles I and painted between 1633-4, and was bought by a private collector. Photograph: Geraint Lewis

## North and south of spelling

Cockneys spell it mof and Lancastrians spell it moth. If you are seven, it makes sense to spell how you talk.

Reports on this year's national tests for seven-year-olds show that regional accents are one of the obstacles to improving the nation's spelling.

Sixteen per cent spelt moth as mof and 14 per cent wrote finking instead of thinking. Bath was spelt with both short and long vowels and sometimes written baf.

Children had difficulty with words where more than one letter represented the vowel. Only one in five could spell scream

correctly. They also applied rules they had learned about sounds to words where they did not apply: bred for bread, nos for nose, fens for fence.

Consonants caused difficulty in words where they are not pronounced, such as knows. The reports on this year's tests say pupils know the rules of spelling but they tend to apply them wrongly and to forget exceptions.

In tests for 11-year-olds, some pupils failed to spell top and press correctly. Most mistakes were made in the spelling of the words apprehensive and occurred.

## Cheesemaker victorious in listeria battle

JOHN ARLIDGE  
Scotland Correspondent

One of Britain's leading cheesemakers, Humphrey Errington, was celebrating victory last night after a bitter year-long battle to protect the good name of his Lanark Blue cheese.

More than one tonne of Lanark Blue, worth more than £60,000, was condemned as unfit for human consumption last year after council bygone officials found traces of listeria in the cheese. Environmental health officers tried to raid Mr Errington's dairy and destroy 44 batches of the gourmet product.

But in a heated confrontation, Mr Errington, 50, refused to allow them on to his land. He insisted the listeria was "natural and harmless" and began a legal battle against the council.

Yesterday he secured victory when a sheriff sitting in Lanark, 15 miles east of Glasgow, ruled that the cheese was safe. Sheriff John Douglas Allan said: "It does not appear to me upon the evidence that the Lanark Blue cheese failed to comply with food safety requirements... The cheese is not likely to be injurious to health." Dismissing earlier rulings that it should be

destroyed, he said some 63,000 portions had been consumed in 1994 without illness.

Sheriff Allan went on to criticise Clydesdale council's environmental health department for using flawed techniques. So-called experts were ill-informed and had been dogmatic and unduly rigid, he said. He "deplored" the council's "combative and confrontational" attack on Mr Errington.

Mr Errington, who raised thousands of pounds from sympathisers in his campaign to protect cheeses like Lanark Blue, which is made from unpasteurised milk, celebrated last night by holding a party with his seven staff at his dairy at Dunsyre in Lanarkshire.

He said the judgment would "send shock waves through all regulatory authorities... This is a tremendous victory for traditional food makers."

Mr Errington is now planning to sue the council for damages. "I am considering a complaint to the ombudsman alleging maladministration by Clydesdale council and possibly asking the Audit Commission to surcharge councillors for their behaviour." The council faces legal bills of nearly £200,000.

## DAILY POEM

### Song of Contrariety

By Robert Graves

Far away is close at hand,  
Close joined is far away,  
Love shall come at your command  
Yet will not stay.

At summons of your dream-despair  
She might not disobey,  
But slid close down beside you there,  
And complaisant lay.

Yet now her flesh and blood consents  
In the hours of day,  
Joy and passion both are spent,  
Twining clean away.

Is the person empty air,  
Is the sceptre clay,  
That love, lent substance by despair,  
Wanes and leaves you lonely there  
On the bridal day?

In the centenary year of Robert Graves's birth, Carcanet Press have recently published the first volume (1910-26) of his *Complete Poems*, with the second volume to follow in 1996. By 1926, when he was 31, Graves had produced 19 books, of which 11 were of verse. This poem, typical of the rhythmic ballad form which Graves employed in his early work, first appeared in *Whippoorwill* (1923). He was yet to meet the American poet Laura Riding with whom he was to have a long affair and whose influence was to change the style and direction of his poetry. Graves died on 7 December 1958.

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## politics

## Labour set to tackle football hooligans

JOHN RENTOUL  
and COLIN BROWN

A Labour government would crack down on British football hooligans abroad by discouraging other European Union countries from simply rounding up troublemakers and innocent supporters together and shipping them all back.

In a "Football Charter" to be launched today, Labour will propose a Europe-wide register of violent supporters and call for EU police forces to prosecute repeat offenders. The aim is to stop thugs travelling abroad, getting thrown out and then doing it again - copying the success of British authorities in excluding persistent offenders from grounds.

The charter accepts that domestic football violence has been much reduced, but says more can be done on the home front as well. It says a Labour government would "aid the progressive transfer to well-trained stewards" of many functions carried out by the police, thus freeing police resources for intelligence work and cutting the costs of policing to clubs.

A Labour source said: "We

would also want to look at the consistency of financial charges imposed by the police for policing matches - some of the fees are driving the smaller clubs to bankruptcy."

The Football Charter, which follows an Anglers' Charter, is part of the party's populist drive to identify with mass culture. Jack Cunningham, Labour's national heritage spokesman, is also expected to write to the Government shortly outlining his concern about Sky Television's purchase of the rights to the first, second and third divisions of the Football League.

The issue is controversial because Labour hopes to neutralise the anti-Labour propaganda in newspapers owned by Rupert Murdoch. But many Labour MPs are critical of the Sky football deal because it means their constituents cannot see live English league football without owning a satellite dish.

There is also concern about the allegations of anti-competitive practices being made against the Murdoch empire by cable television companies. Mr Cunningham said: "We are approaching this issue from the point of view of ownership and

broadcasting, not on the basis of any one individual or any one organisation."

The main theme of the charter is supporters' rights, and it promises to give genuine football supporters a say over the future of the sport for the first time - provided their representative bodies can "get their act together". The two main supporters' bodies, the Federation of Football Supporters' Clubs and the Football Supporters Association, would have to combine, the source said.

Tom Pendry, Labour's sports spokesman, is expected to announce today that in government Labour would set up a "task force" of representatives of spectators, players and clubs to look at a range of issues, including "bungs", laws against ticket touts and the way the sport's ruling body is run.

Labour sources claim already to have put pressure on the Football Association to streamline its decision-making. Last month the FA's chief executive, Graham Kelly, failed with a plan to delegate the powers of the organisation's 90-plus councillors to an executive committee of between 10 and 15.



Battleground: Labour's 'Football Charter' targets violent fans and aims to give genuine supporters a bigger say

## MP backs Bill to ban animal cruelty

A Bill to make it an offence to inflict cruelty on foxes, squirrels and other wild animals is to be revived today by a Labour MP, writes Colin Brown.

The Wild Mammals Protection Bill, which was killed in the Lords in the last session of Parliament, is expected to be taken up again today by Alan Meale, MP for Mansfield. The Bill is likely to disappoint the League Against Cruel Sports because it will not seek to ban fox hunting, stag hunting or hare coursing. But the sponsors have limited its scope to enhance its chances of becoming law.

A similar Bill aroused controversy when it was launched a year ago because it would have banned all forms of hunting with hounds and its sponsor, John McFall, was forced to abandon the anti-hunting clauses. It ran into more opposition in the House of Lords and was finally killed through lack of parliamentary time, although it had passed all its Commons stages.

Mr Meale came second in the ballot of MPs for the right to introduce a backbench Bill and is guaranteed a full day for debate in January. The Bill would make it an offence for the first time to kick, beat, impale, crush or drown wild animals.

The Bill has the backing of the RSPCA. "It would give wild animals the same protection that the 1911 Protection of Animals Act gives captive animals," it said. "At the moment there is no legal protection for wild mammals unless they are a protected species."

## Blair to take 'education crusade' to the country

DONALD MACINTYRE  
Political Editor

Tony Blair is to hold an unprecedented series of open public meetings for teachers and parents next year to secure backing for Labour's planned crackdown on bad schools and teachers.

The Labour leader an-

nounced last night that he intended to take to the road "in a crusade for standards" which party officials said was designed to prove that the adverse and highly publicised reaction of teachers' unions was not representative of the majority views of individual teachers.

Mr Blair told a CBI Loodoo Region dinner that he and

David Blunkett, his education spokesman, would be holding a series of meetings for teachers and parents "of all political persuasions" next year and added: "We are mounting a crusade for standards and I want parents and teachers to feel a part of it."

The meetings - similar in concept to the campaign Mr

Blair conducted among party members to secure backing for a new Clause IV - will be conducted on an "everyone welcome" basis, Mr Blair said.

At the same time he sought to rebuff Tory attacks on the 10-strong Labour Commons rebellion over income tax on Tuesday night by saying that the size of that rebellion "far from

portending trouble in government, firmly underlines where the centre of gravity in our party now lies and the direction in which the party is moving."

He added: "Not long ago there would have been a natural kneejerk desire to vote against any cut in income tax... But no more. There is a very clear understanding that high tax should

not be equated with a high success economy."

Mr Blair prefaced his remarks on the rebellion, which included former Treasury minister Denis Davies, "by tackling head on the most common concern that is raised with me. It goes something like this. 'You're all right Mr Blair but we are not so sure about the rest of the party. We are not so sure that you can take them with you in government.'"

The rebellion - smaller than on Europe and defence estimates in the past - and the publication of Labour's new schools standards document "provided two very important indications of the extent to which the party has changed."

Mr Dobson also demanded the Government obtain a copy of a report being prepared for the current Westminster council by John Barratt, former chief executive of Cambridgeshire council, and make it available to Parliament.

Labour also went on the offensive on another aspect of Westminster, asking the Government to explain why it has vetoed the council being included in an official survey of local authorities' complaints procedures.

## Dobson homes in on asbestos row

CHRIS BLACKHURST  
Westminster Correspondent

The Director of Public Prosecutions has been asked to order a police investigation into homeless families being moved into asbestos-ridden flats by Westminster council.

Frank Dobson, Labour's environment spokesman, said he had also written to the Health and Safety Executive to see if prosecutions should be brought.

New evidence last week showed how the council's for-

mer Tory leaders filled two blocks of flats in a solid Labour ward in Paddington with homeless families rather than move them to key marginal wards elsewhere in the borough.

Mr Dobson drew parallels with the long-running "homes for votes" inquiry, also involving Westminster, that inquiry, being conducted by John Major, the district auditor, is focusing on the council's policy of moving homeless families into blocks known to be dangerously riddled with asbestos.

It is my view that before the asbestos scandal arose, Westminster had dragged Loodoo politics into the gutter - they have now got it down into the septic tank."

He told MPs in the Commons: "There is no excuse for anyone knowingly endangering the lives of other people's families. This is what they did. It has become clearer and clearer that this council knowingly moved homeless families into blocks known to be dangerously riddled with asbestos."

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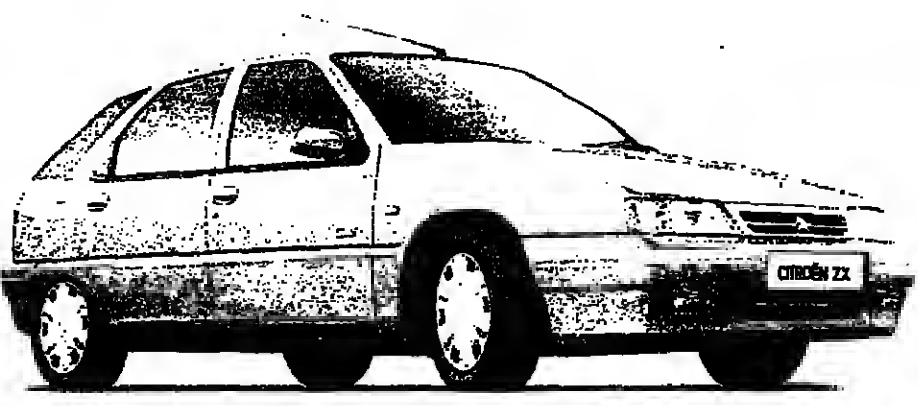
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Raccoon fatally caught in a leg-hold trap.

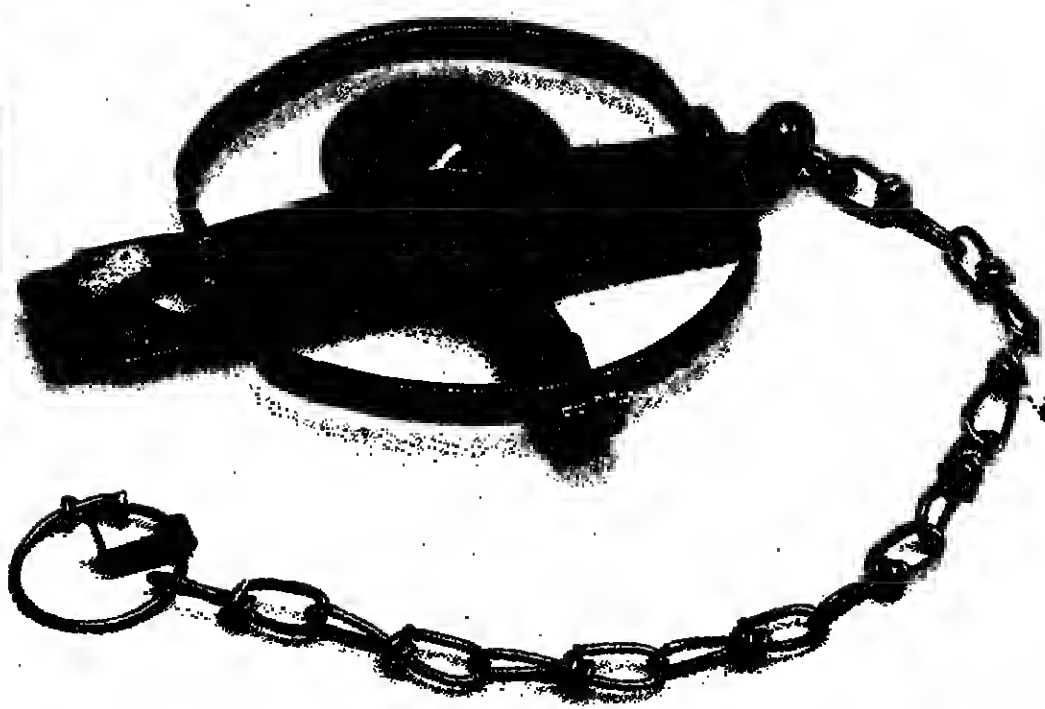


Bobcat captured in a steel jawed leg-hold trap.



Ermine gnawing at the jaws of a leg-hold trap.

# Will the world's fur trade prove as successful at twisting arms as they are at breaking legs?



In 1991, the Council of the European Community took a decision which was applauded around the world.

With millions of animals dying an agonising death in leg-hold traps, the EC banned their use among member states from January 1st, 1995.

The EC Council at the same time voted to ban fur imports from countries which used the same barbaric methods of killing.

Tragically, only the ban affecting member states has so far been enacted.

Due to pressure from the main trapping nations (Canada and the USA) the European Commissioners decided to postpone the ban on imported furs until January 1st, 1996.

And now, the same pressure has apparently persuaded them to propose postponing the ban again (possibly even lifting it altogether).

The fur trade cannot be allowed to get away with it.

Environment Secretary John Gummer has clearly stated that... "the UK Government has made it absolutely clear that it's not prepared to have a postponement of this sort" (Today, BBC Radio 4, November 18th, 1995).

Please write now to your MP at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA and to your

Euro MP at the European Parliament, Brussels B 1049 Belgium, urging them to stand firm against any proposals by the European Commission to delay or scrap the fur import ban.

Mr Gummer deserves all our support. Or January 1st, 1996 will be the start of just another miserable New Year for millions of animals.



**URGE YOUR MP AND EURO MP TO STAND FIRM AND SUPPORT THE EC FUR IMPORT BAN.**

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# Galileo space probe: Nasa scientists wait nervously for news of \$1.6bn flight to explore the solar system's largest planet

## Jupiter mission reaches most dangerous stage

TOM WILKIE  
Science Editor

Scientists around the world will wait anxiously tonight for confirmation that the \$1.6bn Galileo space mission to Jupiter has successfully completed the most perilous stage of its six-year, 2.3-billion-mile (3.7-billion-kilometre) journey.

The main space probe must first monitor the final, fiery moments of a "daughter" craft which will plunge deep into the Jovian atmosphere. Then, in a quick planetary ballet, it must manoeuvre itself into orbit around our solar system's largest planet.

As the instrument-laden spaceship nears Jupiter's system, it is expected to absorb a dose of radiation 35 to 40 times greater than would kill a human. "We have everything crossed we can cross - fingers and toes and all like that. It's certainly a nervous time," said William O'Neil, Galileo project manager at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena.

But the scientists at JPL, which manages the Galileo mission, and at Nasa's Ames Research Center in Mountain View, which built the probe, will have to be satisfied with a delayed confirmation that the probe is sending signals and that the orbiter is on course. Radio signals take 52 minutes to travel from Jupiter to Earth.

No pictures or atmospheric data will be available until after information captured on Galileo's tape recorder and its computer is relayed to Earth through Deep Space Network stations in California, Spain and Australia. A first look will not be available until late this month.

Tonight, the cone-shaped atmospheric probe which was released from the orbiter in July should slam into Jupiter's dense, gaseous atmosphere at 106,000mph. If it enters as planned, it will slow down and parachute through ammonia clouds to a realm never before explored. It will tell the mother ship what it sees inside Jupiter's layers of lightning-pierced clouds and may even detect water rain.

But if the scientists do not get the 746lb (338kg) probe into Jupiter's atmosphere at exactly the right angle, it will either bounce into oblivion or burn up too quickly. The plan is that the atmospheric probe will eventually melt and vaporise, but it should transmit up to 75 minutes of data about chemical composition, radiation, temperature, wind, and atmospheric pressure before contact is cut off. The signals transmitted to the 2.5-ton main orbiter for eventual retransmission to ground control will give scientists their first view of the inner reaches of Jupiter, which is 316 times larger than Earth.

After monitoring its daughter craft's fate, the main orbiter should fire its engines for 49 minutes to enter a two-year, looping orbit around Jupiter and eight of its 16 moons.

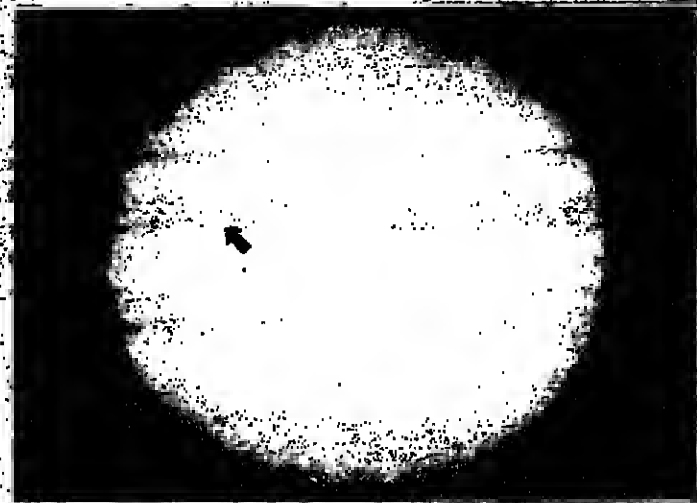
Those moons include Io, which is highly volcanic, and Ganymede, the largest moon in the solar system.

Planning for the mission started nearly 20 years ago, in 1978. More than \$300m had been spent by 1981 on a project that was supposed to be launched in 1984 and to reach Jupiter by July 1987. But the whole mission was delayed and then derailed following the Challenger space shuttle accident of January 1986.



### Countdown to orbit

1989: Galileo is launched from space shuttle Atlantis.  
February: Circles Venus using its gravity as a sling-shot to give it more energy for its trip to Jupiter.  
1990: December First of two swings round the Earth to add further energy.  
1991: Main antenna fails to open properly forcing Nasa to rely on auxiliary communications channel which can only transmit data slowly.  
1992: December Second "gravity assist" from Earth allowing it to depart in the direction of Jupiter.  
1995: July Cone-shaped atmospheric probe released from the main orbiter to pursue its own path to Jupiter.  
November: Malfunction of on-board tape recorder raises fears that the tape may have broken, leaving Galileo unable to record any scientific data. Tests show it may be salvageable.  
December 7: Atmospheric probe hits the planet's dense atmosphere at 106,000 mph. For 75 minutes, the probe should transmit data about the composition of the atmospheric gases before high temperatures and pressures 20 times those of Earth's atmosphere cut off contact.  
For the next 49 minutes, the orbiter's engines should fire to brake it into a two-year, looping orbit around Jupiter and eight of its 16 moons.  
December 12 to 28: Disruption in communications when the Sun blocks the path between Earth and Jupiter.  
End December: A first look at data and pictures should be available.



The Hubble space telescope's view of the distinctive coloured bands in Jupiter's atmosphere. The arrow indicates the point of entry of Galileo's daughter craft - the atmospheric probe.

## Man accused of killing wife tells of gang ordeal

A man charged with murdering his wife choked back tears yesterday as he told a court how he returned home to find her being held at knifepoint by a gang of vicious masked robbers.

Gordon Wardell, 42, denies murdering Carol, 39, a building society manager, at their home in Meriden, Warwickshire, in September last year before allegedly faking a raid at her branch and concocting a charade of being knocked out by the raiders who took his wife and killed her.

Wardell told the jury at Oxford Crown Court that he got home at 10pm after a drink to find his wife being held hostage.

His voice faltered as he broke down and said: "Nothing seemed unusual. I thought Carol had gone to bed as she was suffering from period pain."

"As I got in, my arms were grabbed from both sides and then forced up my back. There was a cloth put across my face and nose."

"My knees were kicked from behind me. I was down on the floor and the light came on and I could see Carol and the man on the edge of the settee."

"He said to me: 'Do what you are told. Keep quiet and get down on the floor.'"

"He says he woke up the next morning to find himself alone, bound and gagged. 'My legs felt as if rods had been forced under the skin. I was scared, frightened and worried.'"

He claims that was the condition police found him in 14 hours after he returned home. He was then taken to hospital where he was later told his wife was dead.

Asked about the effect of attending a news conference in the hunt for his wife's killer two days later, Wardell said it had been traumatic and he had found it easier to go in in a wheelchair than walk unaided.

He denied his limp after the incident was faked to impress insurance staff from the Woolwich where his wife worked.

Asked finally by his counsel if he had killed his wife, Wardell's voice raised and he answered: "Absolutely not". The case continues.

## Quarter of young homeless have tried suicide

GLENDIA COOPER

A quarter of young homeless people have attempted suicide in the last year, according to a new mental health survey.

The survey by the Mental Health Foundation found that young homeless people are also twice as likely to suffer psychi-

atric disorder as those who are not homeless. The disorders they suffered from were also likely to be more severe and persistent than disorders among those with a home.

Only 15 per cent of those with a current psychiatric diagnosis have ever had psychiatric help. Over half of the 161 people

questioned had experienced severe parental neglect or abuse in childhood and 40 per cent had spent time in care. Three times as many of the parents of homeless young people had received psychiatric treatment, mainly for alcohol abuse, compared with the parents of those who were not homeless.

The survey follows last week's Budget which changed benefits to under-25s living in rented accommodation. The Mental Health Foundation says it is feared that the changes, which mean housing benefit will only meet the cost of shared accommodation, will lead to an increase in the number of young

people who rely on the benefit becoming homeless.

June McKerron, director of the foundation, said: "Our research clearly shows that young homeless people are vulnerable to mental health problems and some are so desperate about their futures that suicide seems the only answer."

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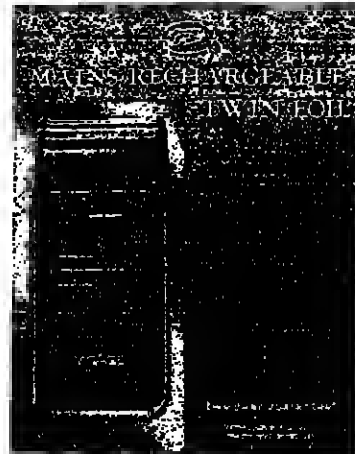
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# international

## Bosnia settlement: French President warns Milosevic of unspecified action if he fails to produce pilots shot down in August

### Heal the wounds of youngest victims

In the run-up to Christmas the Independent is asking readers to support four charities working to help child victims of the wars in former Yugoslavia:

Save the Children is focusing its efforts on children who have been separated from their families, counselling and reuniting them;

The Red Cross is running the largest humanitarian operation in the region, looking after refugees camps and linking people through its messaging network;

War Child plans to build a £2.5m music-therapy centre in Mostar, and to send urgently-needed prosthetics to wound-



ed children in the Tuzla area; Child Advocacy International aims to bring up to 100 sick children to Britain for treatment they could not obtain at home. Please make your cheques or postal orders payable to the charities of your choice and send them to us with the completed coupon.

### INDEPENDENT

#### CHILDREN OF WAR APPEAL

I would like to make a donation to help children in Former Yugoslavia. I enclose a cheque/postal order/GANCAF card for £..... made payable to one of the following charities

- ☐ Child Advocacy International  
☐ British Red Cross Former Yugoslavia Appeal  
☐ War Child  
☐ Save the Children  
 (please tick as appropriate)

Signature..... Date.....

Please post your donation(s) to: The Independent Children of War Appeal, c/o the Independent, PO Box 4011, London E14 5BB. THANK YOU



Snowbound: UN peace-keepers clearing the 6cm of snow that covered the runway at Sarajevo airport yesterday, slowing the arrival of the new peace Implementation Force. Photograph: Peter Andrews / Reuters

## Paris takes belligerent line on its lost airmen

EMMA DALY  
Tuzla

The French President, Jacques Chirac, yesterday warned his Serbian counterpart to produce two French pilots shot down over Serb-held Bosnia three months ago or face unspecified consequences.

Mr Chirac, who has recently demanded greater safety guarantees for Serbs who are to come under government rule next month, raised the issue in a telephone call to Belgrade yesterday, his spokeswoman said, though she gave no details of the conversation.

"The President had a new telephone call with President [Slobodan] Milosevic on Wednesday morning and told him that if the two French pilots were not released in the coming days, France would be forced to draw all the appropriate conclusions," Catherine Colonna said. But she said there was no question of postponing the Paris peace conference, scheduled for 14 December, until the pilots' release, as demanded by their wives.

Captain Frédéric Chiffot and Lieutenant José Souvignat disappeared on 30 August after ejecting from their Mirage 2000 as it plunged towards a hill near the rebel Serb headquarters at Pale, east of Sarajevo. Many UN and Nato officials believe the men are dead, because Radovan Karadzic recently claimed they had been kidnapped by unknown forces, and because they were not used as a bargaining chip by the Serbs at the peace talks in Dayton, Ohio last month.

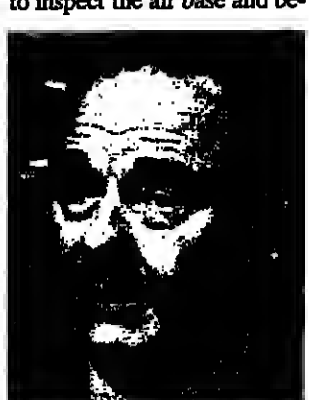
"The most commonly held view here is that if they existed and were alive, they would have been cashed in at Dayton," one official said. "For example, OK, if we get Grbavica [a Serb suburb of the capital due to revert to government control] you get the pilots."

Last week Mr Chirac wrote to the US President, Bill Clinton, urging the international community to strengthen safeguards for Serbs living in Grbavica and four other suburbs ceded to the government at Dayton. "That was definitely linked to the French pilots - that was the right noise the Serbs would want to hear," the official said, "in that Chirac was saying to Clinton: 'I will raise with Clinton what I know are your concerns over Grbavica etc.'"

France will be the third-largest troop contributor to the Nato peace Implementation Force (I-For), which has the difficult task of reuniting Sarajevo within 90 days of the transfer of authority in Bosnia from the UN to Nato. That is expected on 18 December.

Preparations for I-For's arrival are under way in Bosnia, with most attention focused on the new boys: the 20,000 US troops who are in deploy around the northern town of Tuzla. Yesterday a US Air Force cargo plane became the first fixed-wing aircraft to land at the UN air base in Tuzla for more than a year - the runways were closed for most of the war by Serb shelling.

Colonel Neal Patton of the US Air Force and Lt-Col Sid Kooyman, an army liaison officer, flew into Tuzla yesterday to inspect the air base and be-



Chirac: Phoned President Slobodan Milosevic

gin setting up for the arrival, after Paris, of their soldiers. Although the Americans have dispatched several reconnaissance teams to the area, Col Kooyman and his comrades represent the first wave of Dayton peace-keepers to reach the industrial city.

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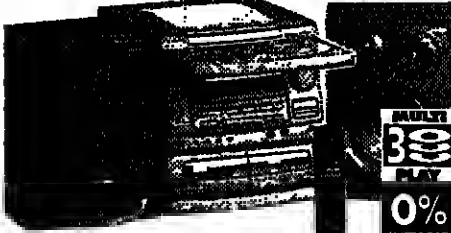


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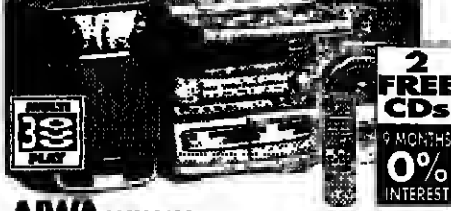


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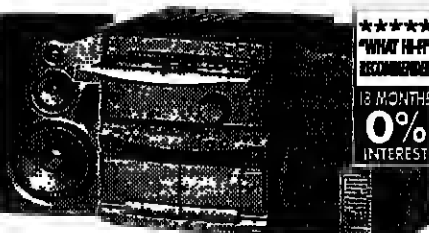


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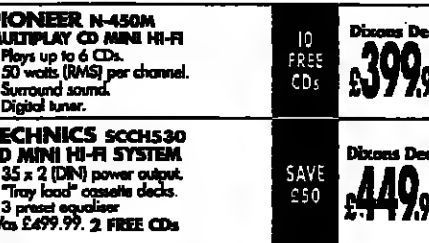
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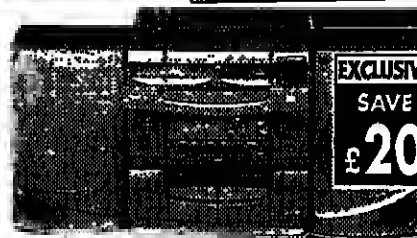
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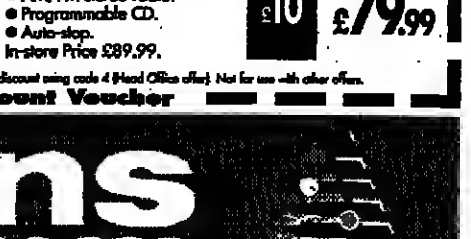


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Death in Valletta: Arafat was for Malta



Chirac: Phoned President Slobodan Milosevic

gun setting up for the arrival, after Paris, of their soldiers. Although the Americans have dispatched several reconnaissance teams to the area, Col Kooyman and his comrades represent the first wave of Dayton peace-keepers to reach the industrial city.

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Death in Valletta: When the Islamic Jihad chief was shot, he and Iranian agents had been planning assassination of the PLO 'traitor'

# Arafat murder 'was foiled by Malta killing'

PATRICK COCKBURN  
Jerusalem  
SAFA HAERI  
Paris

Fathi Shkaki, leader of the militant Palestinian Islamic Jihad organisation, who was shot dead in Malta in October, had just met a senior Iranian envoy in Libya to discuss the assassination of Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the PLO. Iran believes the PLO passed details of Shkaki's travel plans and false passport to Israel, which then arranged for him to be killed outside his hotel in Valletta, a source with access to Iranian intelligence has told the Independent.

Shkaki, whose group has carried out a series of suicide bombings against Israeli targets, was based in Damascus. In October he went to Libya, where he met Hussein Shaikholslam, Iranian deputy minister for foreign affairs with responsibility for the Arab world, who is also believed to be deputy head of Iranian intelligence.

The source says they discussed the murder of Mr Arafat, hated by Iran and Islamic Jihad for his co-operation with Israel and the US in signing the Oslo peace accords. It is not clear that Libya was aware of what they were discussing, though Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan leader, is opposed to Oslo and recently started to expel 30,000 Palestinians from Libya to put pressure on the PLO.

Mr Shaikholslam has long played an important role in Iranian covert operations. He was a leader in the takeover of the US embassy in Tehran in 1979. In 1983 US intelligence believed he helped to organise the suicide truck bomb which killed 241 American Marines in Beirut. He is the liaison between the foreign ministry and the Vezarat-e-Ettelaat, or

information ministry, which is in fact Iranian intelligence.

There was a good reason why Shkaki and Mr Shaikholslam chose to meet in Libya. Islamic Jihad has its headquarters in Damascus, but is closely watched by Syrian intelligence. Iran, although allied to Syria, fears Syria will start negotiations with Israel. Col Gaddafi, on the other hand, allowed Abu Nidal to use Libya as a base when he had Abu Iyad,



Fathi Shkaki: PLO fingered him for the hit-squad

Mr Arafat's chief lieutenant, assassinated in 1991.

On the morning of 26 October Shkaki returned by ship to Malta from Libya. He may have travelled with Mr Shaikholslam, who later lamented on Iranian radio that Shkaki had decided to break his journey in Malta at the last moment. He was wearing a wig, had shaved off his beard and had a forged Libya passport in the name of Ibrahim Dawish. He took a room in the Diplomat hotel in a suburb of Valletta, where he had stayed before. Soon after he checked in, Shkaki went out to some local shops to buy shirts for his children, according to a Maltese

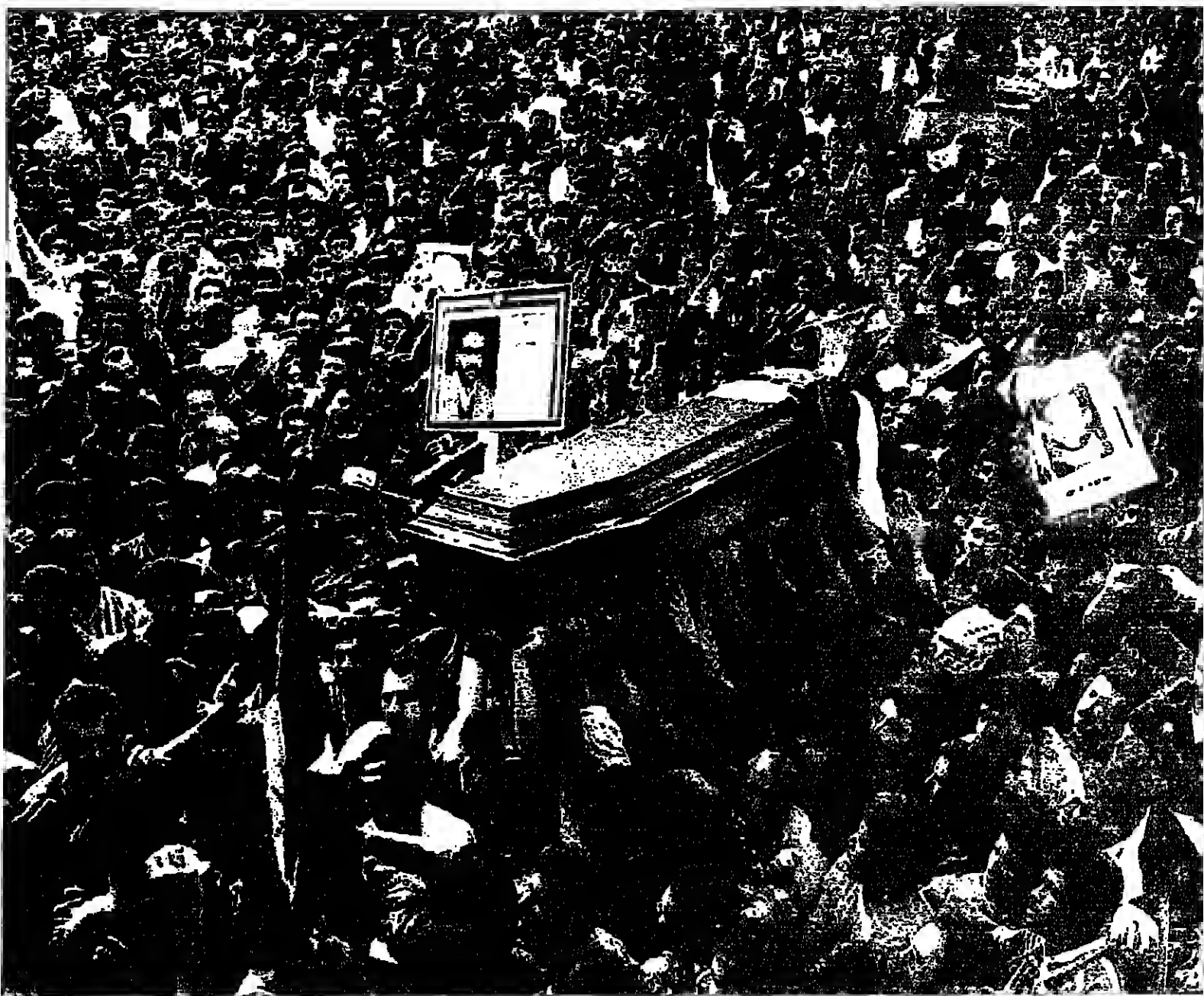
police investigation. On his return two men were waiting for him on a motorcycle, one of whom walked up to him and shot him six times in the head. As Shkaki fell, his assassin jumped on to the motorcycle, which was driven off and was found abandoned under a bridge by the jetty of a yacht harbour. Investigators believe the killers were taken off by boat.

Mossad, the Israeli external intelligence organisation, does not lay claim to assassinations, but was widely assumed in Israel to be behind the killing. Ephraim Sneh, the Health Minister, came close to admitting it. Could PLO intelligence have tipped off Mossad about the whereabouts of Shkaki, as the Iranians believe?

Mossad had reportedly been looking to kill Islamic Jihad leaders ever since two of its suicide bombers killed 21 Israeli soldiers at Beit Lid in Israel in January. Israel also has every reason to try to keep Mr Arafat alive, since the implementation of the Oslo accords depends on his survival. For the same reason Islamic Jihad and the Iranian leadership, who see Oslo as a betrayal of the Palestinians, have a good reason to kill the PLO chairman.

Once relations were warmer. After the overthrow of the Shah by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 Mr Arafat was the first foreign leader to be received by the revolutionaries in Tehran. He said: "Every Iranian freedom fighter is represented in the Palestinian revolution."

But Mr Arafat was neither militant nor Islamic enough for the alliance to last. By March this year he was accusing Iran and Syria of fomenting trouble in the Middle East and creating unrest for the Palestinian authority; now established in Gaza and Jericho. He warned Iran "to stop supporting terrorists" and said:



Lost 'son of the revolution': Shkaki's funeral at a Palestinian camp near Damascus. Iran declared a day of national mourning Photograph: AFP

"Your oil, your money and your bombs will not open the smallest foothold for you on one centimetre of Palestinian soil."

Mr Arafat's security forces were also putting pressure on Islamic Jihad in Gaza and were being accused of collaborating with the Israelis. On the West Bank, Jibril Rajoub, head of Palestinian Preventive Security, based in Jericho, has notoriously cordial relations with the Israeli Shin Bet domestic security service. In October the second stage of the Oslo agreement was signed by Mr Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin. The peace deal was becoming irreversible. Iran was distraught at the

death of Shkaki. He was their closest ally among the Palestinians and considered a "son" of the Islamic revolution. He had written a book entitled: *Khomeini, the Alternative Solution*. He said once that when the Iranian revolution succeeded "I realised that Islam could overcome even a country like the United States." There are Jihad training camps near Qom, 100 miles south of Tehran.

When Shkaki's death was confirmed, Iran declared a day of mourning and the radio news was devoted entirely to tributes to him. On 1 November there were marches with slogans in praise of the dead Jihad leader

and against Zionism, the US and Mr Arafat. When Rahin was assassinated three days later, Iranian radio said: "While Arafat said he was shocked by the news of Rabin's assassination, Palestinian people rejoiced, distributed sweetsmeats, thanked God and danced."

The source close to Iranian intelligence says it is still intent on promoting Mr Arafat's assassination. It has talked with

Ahmed Jibril, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, which has long had offices in Tehran. Jihad launched two failed suicide bomb attacks against Israeli targets in the Gaza Strip soon after its leader died but has since been silent. The organisation was small and very much a one-man band under Shkaki, so it may be severely disrupted by his death.

Mr Arafat, who has heard reports of Iranian plans to assassinate him, said mildly in an interview with the Independent in Gaza that "a large majority of the Iranians are supporting the Palestinian people." He reminded Iranian leaders that he had supported them in the past, adding: "No one can affect the Palestinian independent decision. It belongs only to the Palestinian people."

## IN BRIEF

### France plans early end to tests

Paris - France's last nuclear test blast in the south Pacific will be before the end of February, several months ahead of schedule, the Defence Minister, Charles Millon, said yesterday. France, which has set off four underground blasts in French Polynesia since September, has pledged to sign a nuclear test-ban treaty as soon as the series is complete. Outrage over President Jacques Chirac's decision to break a three-year moratorium on testing has already prompted Paris to say it will reduce the planned eight tests to six. France insists the tests are necessary to ensure the viability of its independent nuclear force and develop simulation technology to make further tests unnecessary. "The analysis of the fourth test has proven that it and the three prior ones have allowed us to obtain the scientific data expected." AP

### Papandreou 'worsens'

Athens - The health of the Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou, worsened yesterday. Doctors were to perform a tracheotomy after failing to disconnect him from life support machinery. "As the use of the respirator is expected to continue a tracheotomy was deemed necessary," a medical bulletin said. In a tracheotomy doctors make a slit in the windpipe and create a breathing hole. This will allow them to remove a tube that has snaked down Mr Papandreou's throat since he was hooked to the respirator. AP

### Pizza 'can ward off prostate cancer'

Washington - US researchers have found that pizza and spaghetti sauce can protect against prostate cancer. A Harvard study over six years of the eating habits of 47,000 men found that those who had at least 10 servings a week of tomato-based foods were up to 45 per cent less likely to develop prostate cancer. AP

### Tigers reject amnesty offer

Colombo - Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger separatists dismissed President Chandrika Kumaratunga's offer of amnesty for those who lay down their arms, saying they did not wish to submit to domination by the army. A spokesman said the rebels had no choice but to "continue with the resistance against military occupation" of the northern rebel stronghold of Jaffna. Reuters

### Gonzalez hints at standing down

Madrid - Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez hinted he may not lead the Socialists in a general election next March, saying he did not want to drag down his party. "I don't want to have happen to me what happened to Margaret Thatcher, who didn't realise she was a problem," Mr Gonzalez said. AP

### Bouncer comes down with a bump

Stockholm - A 130kg (285lb) bouncer was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment for suffocating a restaurant guest by sitting on him. Witnesses told a court in Gallivare, northern Sweden, that the doorman, who was not identified, had intervened to stop a brawl. AP

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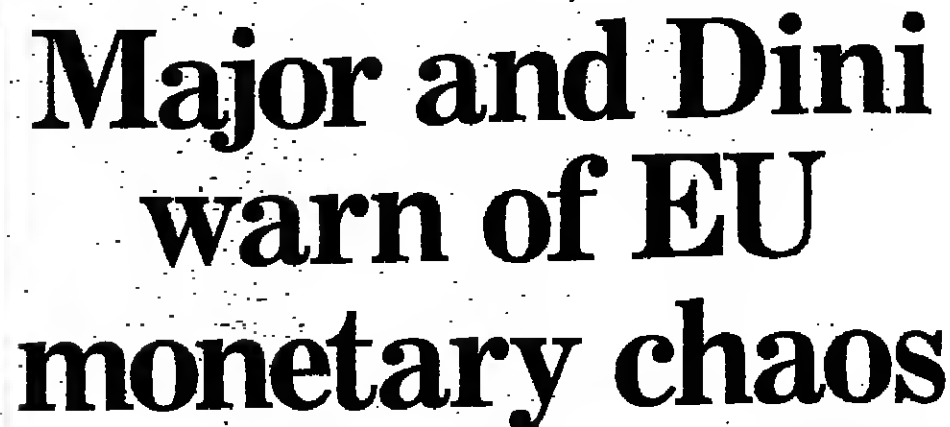
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Yesterday, he denied that such a measure would lead to French-style social unrest. "This kind of decision requires dialogue, not coercion," he said. "This is something that they [the French] should bear in mind."

# Kohl and Chirac forge new Europe

The joint Franco-German letter is being released a week before the European summit in Madrid, which is expected to include preparations for the IGC. But its release at the Franco-German summit suggests a diplomatic effort by both countries to show that they are still functioning together as the "engine of Europe" despite doubts about the extent of President Chirac's commitment to political union, and despite the social unrest in France that threatens its ability to meet the Maastricht criteria for monetary union.

## Socialist MEPs back Turkey trade link

The customs union is designed to give Turkey the closest relationship with the EU short of full membership.



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# Chirac gives PM 'full support' on strikes

MARY DEJEVSKY  
Paris

As airline staff and teachers prepared to join the strikes that have paralysed France for almost two weeks, President Chirac yesterday put the full weight of his office behind Alain Juppé, expressing "his full support for the position set out by the Prime Minister".

With a true presidential touch, he also told the regular cabinet meeting that special provision should be made during the strikes for homeless people, deprived of the shelter of warm underground stations.

The majority of trade unions, including two of the biggest, the Force Ouvrière (FO) and the CGT, vowed to continue the strikes. Basking in the success of the nationwide protests on Tuesday, and the still-growing strike movement, they called today for further demonstra-

tions to keep up the pressure on the government. The five rail unions have also voted to maintain their 12-day-old strike.

With the battlelines thus drawn, and no sign of either side retreating, the balance of forces - which until Tuesday appeared to favour the protesters - seemed to be shifting to the government. Even the union leader who has made much of the running, Marc Blondel of the FO, seemed to be looking for a way out when he called yesterday not only for the withdrawal of the "Juppé plan" but for "the opening without delay of negotiations at prime-ministerial level".

On a television discussion programme on Tuesday night, Mr Blondel and Louis Vianet of the CGT produced tired clichés which contrasted poorly with an energetic performance from the industry minister, Franck Borotra. Their call yesterday for a second day

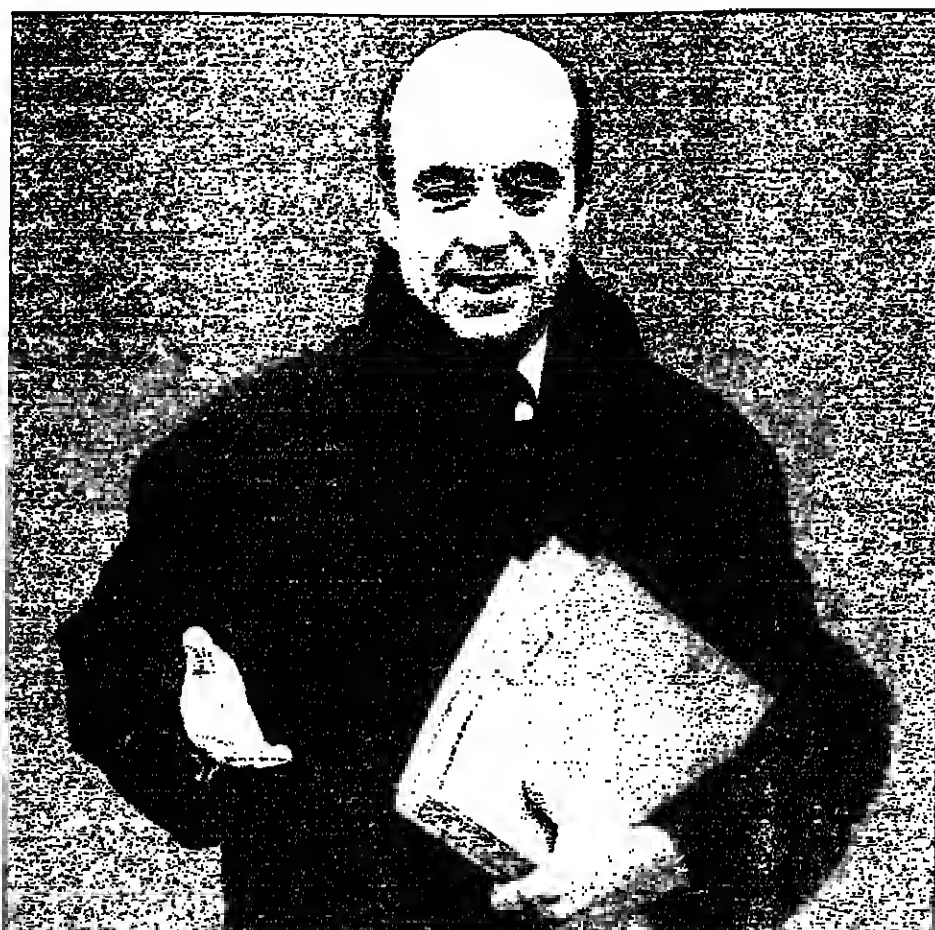
of demonstrations within a week not only looks unimaginative, but holds the serious risk that fewer people will turn out.

Several other factors are moving in the government's favour. Mr Chirac's firm support of Mr Juppé makes a climb down by the Prime Minister less likely. The alternative transport organised for Paris commuters has started to reduce rush-hour jams, and the FO, which yesterday launched a subscription campaign to help strikers, may be running short of money. The cold weather also helps - by discouraging marchers.

No less crucial is the fact that there is still a key dissenter in the ranks of the unions. Nicole Notat, head of the biggest union, the CFDT, which has links with the Socialist Party, is adamant that Mr Juppé's plans for welfare reform do have some good points. But Ms Notat's strength among her

own union activists is questionable: she was booed and forcibly removed from the 24 November demonstration by some of her own militants. A wider public, however, sees her as a forthright woman who talks sense and does not allow herself to be pushed around. Yesterday, in words which may turn out to be prophetic, she told a radio interviewer: "I don't know whether the current protests are going to become quite as big as people say."

The protesters, for their part, have on their side the continuing sympathy of much public opinion, the general dissatisfaction with Mr Chirac and Mr Juppé in particular, and the strength of persisting grievances in individual sectors - like the railways. But if layoffs increase, and as deliveries of fuel, parts and raw materials start to seize up, sympathies could change very quickly.



Standing firm: Prime Minister Alain Juppé greets the press after a Cabinet meeting at the Elysée Palace yesterday, as the strikes continue. Photograph: Michel Luchitz/AP

## Egypt denies hit squads

The Egyptian embassy in London has denied a report in yesterday's *Independent* that the Egyptian government has sent up to 100 men from its security service to hunt down its opponents in Britain. writes Michael Sheridan.

"The Egyptian embassy denies categorically the news report," an official statement said. "This has never been the case nor is it Egyptian policy." The embassy described the report as "groundless and pure imagination," adding that "Egypt is well known to be a country which respects international law and does not interfere in any way in the internal affairs of any country." A Foreign Office spokesman said the report was without foundation.

The *Independent* quoted a reliable military source in Cairo as saying that the agents began arriving in London last month and their mission was to hunt down Islamic fundamentalists, against whom the government of President Hosni Mubarak is engaged in a ruthless campaign in Egypt.

## Trade trip to Nigeria backed by Whitehall

STEVE CRAWSHAW

The British government is sponsoring businessmen to go to Nigeria in order to drum up trade just as Nigerian opposition groups are issuing a concerted call for sanctions against the Nigerian military regime.

When General Sani Abacha's government last month hanged Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others, on what were generally regarded as trumped-up charges, Nigeria was condemned worldwide. It was promptly suspended from the Commonwealth and John Major, who was attending the Commonwealth summit in Auckland, talked of "judicial murder". Nigeria, it was suggested, would now be a pariah.

Now, however, the Department of Trade and Industry is preparing to subsidise a sponsored trip to Nigeria in two months' time.

Philip Oppenheim, a minister at the department, noted recently: "My department has scaled down the level of promotional activity in recent years." None the less, next year's trip, planned for February under the auspices of the London Chamber of Commerce, promises "appropriate high-level PR and press coverage" - perhaps a dubious attraction in the circumstances.

When first asked about government policy, a DTI spokesman insisted that companies receive "no financial support", in terms of the encouragement to do deals. In reality, money is still freely available. Originally, applications for government funds had to be in by 20 October - before Saro-Wiwa's execution and the international uproar that followed. The deadline has now been indefinitely extended.

Organisers admitted yesterday: "We fully expected them [the DTI] to cancel." But Oluakun Soyinka, co-ordinator of a Nigerian pro-democracy umbrella group in London, said he was not surprised to hear that the trip was going ahead. "It's all bluster. Underneath, it's business as usual."

Tony Lloyd, a Labour foreign affairs spokesman who is hosting a meeting in London today at which Nigerian opposition groups will present their demands for an oil embargo, said he was "surprised" that the DTI has decided to go ahead with the trip. He warned of sending "the wrong message", and argued: "The immediate response ought to be to cancel or at least defer these trips. If there's a milder climate in six or eight months' time, you can always put it back on the agenda."

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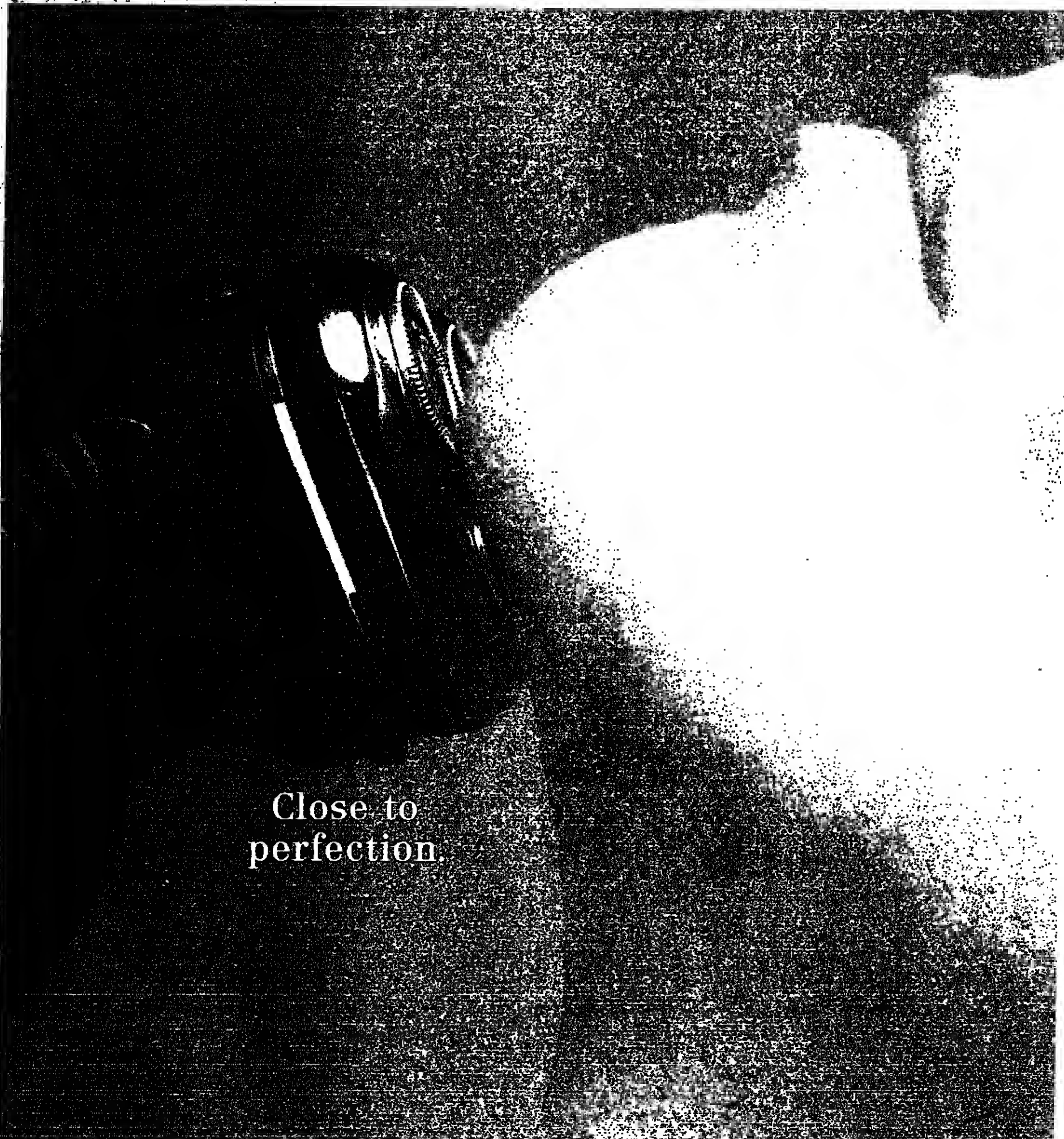
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## international

Cannabis for medical use: Aids and cancer sufferers find solace in smoke-filled rooms



Lighting the way: Joseph Soto and his friend, Hiram, both HIV positive, enjoy a smoke at the Cannabis Buyers' Club. Photograph: Catherine Leroy

## Gingrich faces new threat of legal scrutiny

RUPERT CORNWELL  
Washington

His popularity tumbling and his judgement increasingly questioned even within his own Republican party, Newt Gingrich is facing a new threat: the likely appointment of an independent counsel to investigate alleged ethical irregularities by the House Speaker.

After months of stonewalling, Republicans on the House Ethics Committee have reluctantly agreed to the principle of an outside investigator to look into what has been called "Newt Inc.", a skein of political and personal ventures by Mr Gingrich, some involving the political action committee Gopac, which the Speaker headed until early this year.

Until now the committee of five Republicans and five Democrats has been deadlocked. But the dam burst last week with charges by the Federal Election Commission (FEC) that Gopac spent huge sums helping Mr Gingrich win a hairbreadth re-election victory in 1990. It also produced documents showing

that big Gopac contributors asked for help with their problems with government, creating what the FEC calls "the appearance of corruption".

Mr Gingrich has dismissed the allegations as "phony, totally phony". Even so, this new controversy was clearly a factor in his decision last week to keep out of the spotlight in the negotiations over the 1996 budget, where his outbursts have handed the White House a massive public-relations boost in its battle with Congress.

The argument now is over how wide the counsel's powers should be, with Republicans insisting they be kept as narrow as possible, but Democrats adamant that no Gingrich controversy should be off-limits.

Thus does history repeat itself on Capitol Hill. Seven years ago, a fiery young minority whip named Newt Gingrich led the campaign for a powerful counsel to probe alleged misdeeds by the then Democratic Speaker, Jim Wright. Mr Wright was forced to resign.

No one is yet predicting a similar fate for Mr Gingrich. But

a counsel with broad powers will have much material to work with. According to a transcript released by the FEC, one speaker at an internal Gopac meeting in August 1990 estimated "Newt support" at \$250,000 a year. Separate allegations centre on possible Gopac funding for a college course taught by Mr Gingrich, in breach of tax laws.

The biggest headlines however were generated in autumn 1994 by the Speaker's infamous - and shortly thereafter cancelled - contract for a \$4.5m book advance from Rupert Murdoch's HarperCollins publishing company, just when Mr Murdoch had pressing business with Congress and federal broadcasting authorities.

Meanwhile, President Bill Clinton yesterday vetoed the Republican bill for balancing the budget by 2002. But the White House is promising its own proposal by the end of the week, raising hopes of a compromise to avert another federal shutdown when the current stopgap government funding expires on 15 December.

## 'Speakeasy' campaigners push case for marijuana

DAVID USBORNE  
San Francisco

It is two minutes to one in the afternoon and "last orders" is called at the Island Bar. A handful of punters stir lazily from the armchairs and sofas that line the walls to make a last purchase. Only Mexican varieties are sold on this floor, for the more expensive Californian labels there is another bar upstairs. We are not talking booze here, but the green leaf - marijuana.

This is the Cannabis Buyers' Club on Market Street in San Francisco. An anonymous-looking four-storey office building from the outside, within it is a modern version of a Prohibition era speakeasy. The air is heavy with marijuana smoke and the rhythms of Annie Lennox. This lunchtime the trade is hectic at both bars, which, as well as cannabis by the 2.5-gram bag, also sell pot-laced pastries, water pipes and other drug-taking paraphernalia.

"What we are doing is totally, absolutely illegal," confesses the club's director and founder, Dennis Peron, an imp-



Dennis Peron: Believes his stand will be vindicated

ish grin breaking out from under his white hair. But this is by no means a frivolous venture, pursued just for the fun of breaking the law. On the contrary, Mr Peron wants to change the law. This is a club reserved for "customers with serious, mostly chronic diseases, in particular Aids and cancer, and it is at the forefront of a growing nationwide campaign to legalise cannabis for medical use. No one gets the necessary membership without a written diagnosis from their doctor.

Nor is this an ordinary day at the club, one of about 26 now operating across America. When one o'clock comes, Mr Peron leads 100 of his members on a march down Market Street to United Nations Plaza to publicise the latest phase of his campaign: a drive to collect enough signatures to put a popular petition to California's voters next November, asking them to let doctors prescribe marijuana to the gravely ill. The police have shown up in strength, but, this being San Francisco and an oasis of liberal politics in America, they actually help the marchers. Passing cars honk with approval.

It was after the death of his former lover from Aids that Mr Peron founded the club in 1991, the first of its kind. He has seen its membership explode to more than 7,000 today. As much as a dispensing chemist for the cannabis, it is also a place for social contact and mutual support. "I'm so proud and so happy these people aren't alone any more," says Mr Peron.

Curtis, for example, who is 34 and has had HIV for nine years, comes to the club about twice a week, in part to linger for a couple of hours and meet friends. More importantly, he is certain marijuana has helped his body cope with the virus. He says that it helps him sleep, restores his appetite and suppresses the nausea that is brought on by the anti-Aids drug, AZT. A fresh joint in his hand, he explains: "If I didn't take pot, it would just be an endless cycle of getting up in the morning and not being able to eat anything and then not taking the AZT because it makes me feel so bad." Several others at the bar offer similar testimonials. "If it wasn't for the club, I would be dead by now," says Peter Dekon, who has a brain tumour. "I'm certain of it."

On the legal front Mr Peron's experience has been more frustrating. The federal government continues to resist revising its designation of cannabis as a category one drug, too dangerous even for doctors to prescribe on however a limited basis. Cocaine and morphine, by contrast, are category two drugs. The California Assembly finally this year did pass a law offering a limited legalisation of the drug for medical use, only to see it instantly vetoed by Governor Pete Wilson.

Even so, the notion of allowing marijuana use for therapeutic purposes only is increasingly being debated nationwide. Federal officials insist that there is no scientific evidence proving the benefits of marijuana as a treatment. But last summer the Journal of the American Medical Association published an article advocating limited legalisation co-authored by Lester Grinspoon, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard.

"The ostensible indifference of physicians should no longer be used as a justification for keeping this medicine in the shadows," the article argued. Back at the club, Dennis Peron remains convinced that he will one day be vindicated. With the California petition, he may be making an important start. In a non-binding vote four years ago, Californians voted 80 per cent in favour of limited legalisation. If he can get the necessary 600,000 signatures to qualify for a place on the ballot, his latest initiative could become law. "This is just now beginning to achieve a critical mass," he says, passing a joint around.

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صكرا من الاميل



The last Panchen Lama died in 1989, after spending 12 years under house arrest by the Chinese. Fears are growing for the safety of the nomad boy chosen by the Dalai Lama. He and his parents were arrested and taken to Peking, where they are being kept under house arrest.



# argument



**Colin Blakemore**, in the first of two opposing articles today and tomorrow by leading scientists, argues that BSE is a cause for great public concern

## Why we should all give up beef

We've all seen them – those pitiful images of wobbly cows. We've all imagined it – a plague of Biblical proportions striking people down with a disease that literally rots the brain. The most horrific scenario is as follows: BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) was caused by feeding cows with material from sheep infected with a similar condition, scrapie; the transmissible agent has spontaneously transformed, rendering it infectious to other species including humans; it pervades the human food chain, not only through fragments of offal in meat pies, sausages and burgers, but in the nerves that are found in the best cuts of meat, as well as in gravy granules and, conceivably, milk; the human disease has a very long incubation period, perhaps 20 years, and

thus a pandemic of incurable and lethal disease will hit Britain in a decade or so, striking down a generation of beef-eating 30-year-olds and leaving the country of beefeaters in the hands of vegans.

Before this is quoted as my opinion, I hasten to add that we have solid evidence for none of this story, and I hope with all my heart that it's nonsense. But what we are most definitely not entitled to say is what the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, did say last Sunday, that there is "no conceivable risk" of BSE being transmitted from cows to people. This statement revealed as much about the lamentable ignorance of scientific methods and elementary statistics among British politicians as it did about the desperation of the Government

to avoid yet another scandal. Not only is a risk "conceivable" but it is increasingly being acknowledged by experts, including the Government's own advisers and the scientists whose research will eventually allow that risk to be properly assessed.

The very nature of spongiform encephalopathies militates against a rapid resolution of the current dilemma. We don't even know for sure the nature of the transmissible agent in BSE, although it is probably a so-called prion, a class of chemical agents named as recently as 1982. These nasty little molecules are non-living fragments of protein that are resistant to disinfectants or modest heat and can probably never be combated by conventional vaccination. Healthy nerve cells in the brain produce prion proteins,



Food for thought: statistical observations may not be conclusive, but they do not support Stephen Dorrell's claim that there is 'no conceivable risk'

but they differ from the nasty prions in having a different molecular shape. The bad prion does its deadly business by wrapping itself around the healthy form, replicating itself, causing the destruction of nerve cells and the release of more evil molecules. As far as we know, prion protein stays trapped in the nervous system of an infected animal, but that means

that it could, in principle, be present in any part of the body that has a nerve supply, including muscle (ie, meat).

Spongiform brain diseases occur naturally in many species, though they tend to be very rare. The human encephalopathy, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), was described early this century. There are about one in a million cases a year of CJD all

over Europe – that means about one a week in this country. Ninety per cent of them are thought to be caused by a spontaneous fault occurring in nerve cells, which makes them produce the wrong sort of prion.

There is no evidence, in any species, that these diseases are contagious or can be transmitted sexually or even through blood. But they are transmissible. We know that from the chilling story of the spongiform disease kuru, which occurs surprisingly frequently among New Guinea people, who have the curious habit of eating the brains of their dead relatives. It seems that prions from an infected human brain can enter the body through the gut, get into the blood and thence infect the brain of the consumer. The average incubation period for kuru (between eating Uncle Arthur and feeling very odd) is only four years. Although it is often said that the incubation period for CJD is 20 years or more, there is no strong evidence for this.

The first cases of BSE in British cattle were reported in November 1986. Where did BSE come from? The finger of guilt pointed clearly at the relatively recent practice of giving cattle (especially dairy cows) feed containing bone meal and carcass trimmings from sheep (and indeed from cattle, too). A committee chaired by Sir Richard Southwood, set up by the Government in May 1988, concluded that the sheep products in feed probably caused the transmission of a scrapie-like condition to cattle. An alternative opinion is that the beef products in cow feed were responsible. Whatever the origin, feeding practices appeared to be to blame and the Government, acting with admirable speed, introduced a ban on the feeding of ungulates to ungulates in July 1988.

Everyone agrees that no human being appears to have developed a spongiform disease after eating lamb or even sheep brain, although scrapie (which is, incidentally, largely genetic in origin) has been known for at least the past 250 years. On the other hand, if material from the brain of an infected sheep is injected directly into the brain of a monkey, the latter develops a spongiform disease after about three and a half years. The conclusion must be that the scrapie agent does not normally reach the brain from the gut.

The Southwood Committee concluded that it was also unlikely (not "inconceivable", please note) that the BSE agent

would transmit to humans through food, but, to err on the side of caution, they recommended the exclusion from the human food chain of infected carcasses and milk from infected animals, and the withdrawal of bovine products from materials used for medicinal purposes. Again, the Government acted promptly, in August 1988 requiring the slaughter of obviously infected animals and the destruction of their milk.

In November 1989 the "specified offal" ban came into force, forbidding the use of various bits of cattle, including brain and spinal cord, in products for human consumption. Despite persistent reassurances, it seems that this ban was not completely

effective, either because of sloppy methods or deliberate negligence, and it has been progressively strengthened.

The Southwood Committee predicted that the total of BSE cases would be 17,000-20,000, that it was unlikely to transmit to other species, and that cattle would be a "dead-end host", the disease disappearing within a few years. In fact, the rate of new cases rose to 1,000 a week, and 300 a week are still being reported; many of them animals born after the ban (BABs).

The most likely interpretation is that the ban isn't being fully observed. However, there remains the frightening possibility of "vertical transmission", from infected animals to their offspring, perhaps across the placenta or through milk. This has been invoked as the possible cause of new cases of BSE among BABs, but if the incubation period of BSE in cattle is about four years, the cases we are seeing now were infected in the early Nineties, when the controls were certainly less strict.

I gave up eating all beef when I first heard of BSE. I have to admit that this was as much because of the evidence of a link to cancer and heart disease as any real fear of catching BSE. Nevertheless, the series of media

scare, categorical Government denials, and escalating restrictions has made me more concerned rather than less. Many scientists and clinicians far more expert in this area than I now appear to share my worries, most notably Sir Bernard Tomlinson, eminent neuropathologist and former government adviser, who recently said that he had changed his mind and that burgers, pies and beef liver might (note "might") cause CJD.

Sir Bernard's remarks and the ensuing media concern were triggered by a somewhat mysterious series of individual cases, including some in surprisingly young adults and especially four dairy farmers who had worked with infected herds. Statistician Dr Sheila Gore estimated that there should have been only about two cases among all farmers since 1990 and that the probability of the four deaths among dairy herdsmen arising by chance variation on the normal pattern was 1 in 10,000.

The numbers are still very small and there are some concerns about the statistical methodology. However, in scientific research a probability of just 1 in 20 is usually taken as "statistically significant". The observations may not be conclusive but they most definitely do not support Mr Dorrell's statement that there is "no conceivable risk".

The next two years will be critical. If research continues, we may also have a much clearer picture of how these encephalopathies transmit and, if humans are indeed protected in some way from BSE, how that protection operates. In this context, I note with regret that the Neuropathogenesis Unit in Edinburgh, one of the main centres studying the disease, has recently had its funding cut.

Given the quagmire of slim evidence and contradictory opinion, what should the meat-loving public do? Stay calm; don't eat beef pies, burgers or sausages; consider giving up all beef until the picture is clearer; listen to the scientists. And the Government should learn that if it continues to betray its ignorance of the concept of risk by transforming cautious scientific and medical advice into categorical reassurances, which it subsequently has to withdraw, the public will rightly become increasingly distrustful of anything that it says.

The writer is Waynelete Professor of Physiology at the University of Oxford. Tomorrow: Robert Will, head of the CJD surveillance unit at Edinburgh's Western General Hospital.

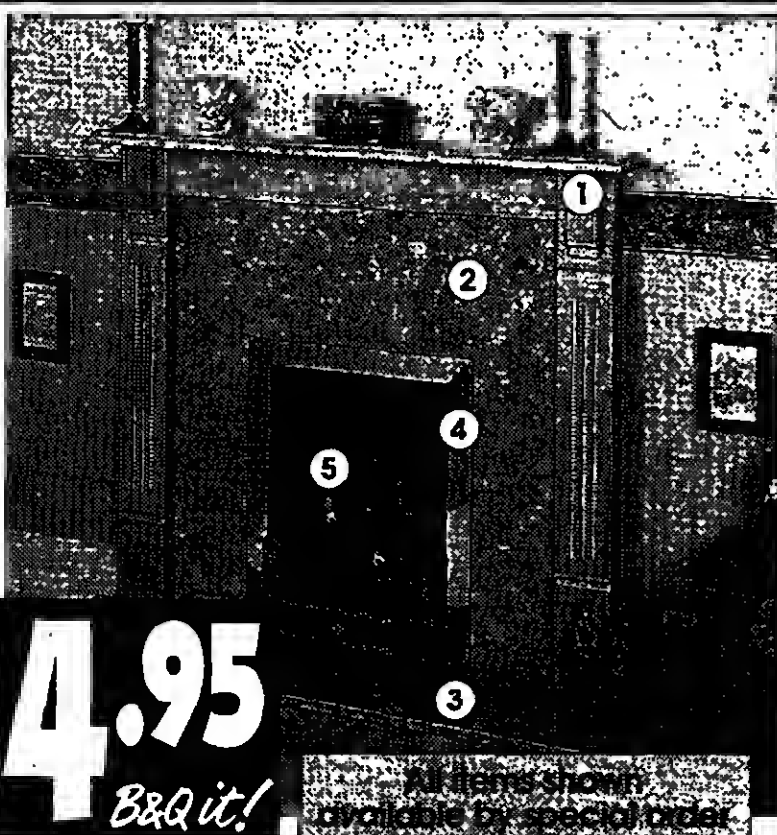
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## Danger: vacancy in the Kremlin

Russia's parliamentary elections on 17 December will take place in a climate of acute political uncertainty. Intrigue, violence and popular disillusion form the backdrop to a vote that will pose more questions than it will answer about Russia's future. The elections seem certain to produce a deeply fragmented State Duma (lower house of parliament), with no party commanding a majority. Communists, nationalists and other forces of reaction will probably perform better than liberal Westernisers, but party allegiances are weak in Russia and many elected members, thirsty for government largesse, may drift into the camp of Viktor Chernomyrdin, the centrist prime minister, after they take their seats.

More significant than the elections is the drama off-stage. President Boris Yeltsin, having suffered his second heart attack of the year in late October, is still convalescing in a sanatorium outside Moscow. It seems increasingly unlikely that he will run again for office in next June's presidential election. That contest will be critically important for Russia because the constitution, introduced after Mr Yeltsin shelved an earlier rebellious parliament out of existence in 1993, gives far more power to the presidency than to the legislature. Rival politicians, including Alexander Lebed, reputed to be Russia's most popular general, Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist leader, and Grigory Yavlinsky, the liberal reformer, are already jostling for the presidential succession. They view the parliamentary elections as a way of establishing their credentials for the contest next year.

However, their behaviour has aroused the hostility of Mr Yeltsin's personal assistants - including Alexander Korzhakov, his powerful chief bodyguard - who stand to be swept from the Kremlin as soon as

the president leaves office. Certain figures in the Yeltsin entourage have even hinted that they may seek to invalidate the parliamentary elections if the result goes against Mr Chernomyrdin and the pro-government camp. Moreover, if the prime minister's party, known as Our Home Is Russia, crashes to defeat on 17 December, thus undermining the prospects of a Yeltsin or Chernomyrdin victory in June, it is conceivable that some of those closest to Mr Yeltsin will attempt to delay or cancel the presidential elections.

Such machinations would be less worrying, were it not that violence seems to be turning into a permanent feature of post-Communist Russian politics. Only two days ago, three hand grenades destroyed the office of an extreme nationalist MP at the parliament building in Moscow. Four MPs have been murdered since the last elections in 1993. Many MPs routinely carry guns. The atmosphere of insecurity has been enhanced by Russia's military crackdown in Chechnya, which was launched almost exactly one year ago and has predictably generated a backlash of terrorism and sabotage. In the latest incident, a car bomb killed 11 people last Monday in Grozny, the Chechen capital.

To cap Russia's troubles, a majority of voters seem disinclined to give credit to their rulers for the fact that, at long last, the government's economic reforms are bearing fruit. Inflation is falling, the rouble is stable and mass privatisation has given millions a stake in the future. However the memory of recent hardships is still vivid. Unless popular attitudes change before June, this could prove fatal to Mr Chernomyrdin. He remains on balance the West's preferred successor to Mr Yeltsin, but the West would be wise to remember that orderly transfers of power are the exception, not the rule, in Russian history.

## Nation shall speak cheaply unto nation

It is becoming traditional at this time of year to praise the quality of the BBC's renowned World Service and then to deplore the spending cuts imposed on that venerable organisation by a parsimonious Foreign Office. This year sees a gloom omen set of figures, according to which the planned Foreign Office grant of just over £169m will be pared by about £5.4m.

The Foreign Office in its own annual report says that World Service radio gains an audience of 130 million regular listeners and "enhances Britain's standing abroad and forms among listeners a better understanding of the UK". The National Audit Office, for its part, recently praised improvements in efficiency in a broadly favourable report on the World Service.

So far, this is a familiar story of beleaguered broadcaster philanthropic government, bloated Foreign Office mandarins spending millions on "smoked salmon and champagne" while symbol of national glory declines, and so on.

This picture, however, is a simplification of real and important developments within the BBC. Yes, there are reductions on the way in the BBC's global coverage. Several prestigious foreign offices are due to close next year, diminishing an already rather threadbare and cheaply funded network of worldwide radio contributors, many of whom are remunerated on terms that are far from generous. Yet these particular cuts have little to do with the Foreign Office. They result from the allocation of resources

within the whole of the BBC, where there is still a wasteful duplication of effort between the World Service, the corporation's own national newsgathering service, and the burgeoning regional news operations.

Simultaneously, staff - still recovering from the necessary rigours of the drive for efficiency - report instances of junketing by managers and incongruously expensive behaviour on the part of ancillary and planning staff. Some of these stories may be unfair or apocryphal, but it would aid the BBC's case if they did not persistently combine to generate hostile newspaper headlines.

Most important, however, the future of the World Service raises questions that go to the heart of the BBC's structural dilemma. Can it continue to maintain an autonomous editorial staff and separate premises? If they should merge, as logic might dictate, what are the implications for funding? Merging the World Service with the BBC's main news and current affairs department means mixing money from the licence fee with funds directed from the taxpayer. And since World Service TV accepts advertising abroad, this mix is further leavened by commercial revenue. There has been no substantial public discussion of the implications for public accountability of this mix.

These are all matters to which the BBC must address itself if it wants to maintain a credible global radio and television presence. Blaming the Foreign Office will no longer do.

ANOTHER VIEW Tony Benn

## Tax cuts we cannot afford

The vote in the House of Commons on Tuesday night against the tax cuts proposed in the Budget marks an important development in the return to integrity in British politics.

Throughout the Eighties the British people were persuaded that the scale of the public services was the cause of our economic decline and that cuts in income tax were desirable, leaving the tax burden to be imposed on the poor by higher indirect taxation.

Things have moved on since then, however, and more and more people are coming to realise that the huge tax cuts made for the very richest widened the gap between the rich and poor, undermined the possibility of providing the health and education services that we need and, indeed, strangled local government, which also provides essential services.

No doubt next year, as a final gift to its wealthy supporters, the Government will make even more slashing cuts in personal taxation, hoping to leave the Treasury bare so that an incoming Labour government will lack the resources to meet people's needs.

If Labour is going to win the argument as well as the vote, it has to be quite clear about income tax and not pretend that it can be cut and that public services can be maintained and improved.

In 1959 Hugh Gaitskell gave a pledge during the election campaign that a Labour government would not increase taxation, and that statement punctured the credibility of the Labour case like a pin in the balloon, for after that, no one really believed that a Labour government could solve the problems it would inherit.

As we are seeing now in France, the international financial community is absolutely determined to destroy the welfare state in order to bring about a single currency administered by a central bank that would be free from any democratic control, and the social cost of this policy will be catastrophic.

The Labour Party now must face the harsh reality. It must bring its thinking up to date and start thinking the unthinkable again; namely, that people need to be put ahead of profit, and must be put above the demands of international capitalism.

The MPs who voted against the tax cuts on Tuesday night were making a stand for the public services against the bankers who would like to take over the world. And I suspect that there is enormous support for that position among thinking people who do not want to see our social fabric destroyed.

The writer is Labour MP for Chesterfield.



Weather brings Britain to its knees

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Labour crusade to raise standards in schools

From Mr David Blunkett  
Sir: Your news reports and analysis on Wednesday (6 December) suggest that the proposals in Labour's paper on education, *Excellence for Every-one*, are Tory ideas. Far from it. Our proposals build on the research carried out by those in the school improvement movement, described in your pages on Tuesday by Michael Barber ("Today's lesson: excellence"), and on the experience of schools and Labour local authorities across the country.

The major difference between Labour and the Tories is not an argument about individual schemes. Having proposed our structural reforms in July, we have moved on to the central theme of raising standards in our schools.

The leaked memo from Gillian Shephard's presentation to the Cabinet in September revealed that she concedes that structures are less important than standards. Yet the only legislative proposals we had this year - in an education system for 7 million pupils - were plans to extend assisted places (adding around 3,000 extra pupils), compulsory opting out for church schools (opposed by the bishops), the paper promise of nursery vouchers (rejected by several Tory councils) and a scheme to get the banks to take on student debt (already spurned by the Midland).

I used the language of a crusade on Wednesday because that

is what we need when our pupils perform just half as well as those in Germany, Japan and France. We are talking about equipping our nation for the challenges of a new century and a global economy. That is a task that this government has ignored in an effort to score petty party points on structures.

Because we recognise the urgency of the proposals, we will announce a series of pilot Labour authorities which will get our proposals under way - in partnership with schools, teachers, parents and governors - before the Government finally calls a general election. The Tories may be satisfied with 35th place in the world education league. Labour certainly is not.

Yours faithfully,  
DAVID BLUNKETT  
MP for Sheffield (Lab)  
House of Commons  
London, SW1  
6 December

The writer is shadow secretary of state for education and employment.

From the Earl Russell

Sir: Is it a coincidence that Labour's plans to "improve education" by bashing teachers are announced on the same day on which, by failing to vote against the Budget tax cuts, that party has abandoned the hope of improving education by more conventional means? Like the Conservatives, Labour will need many whipping boys to carry the blame for the consequences of its own failure to spend money.

### Recipe for US military disaster

From Mr Norman Moss  
Sir: President Clinton's instructions to American troops going to Bosnia are scarcely credible. He told them: "If you think you are about to be attacked, you may respond with massive firepower."

This is a recipe for disaster, the kind of disaster that occurred in Vietnam, as when some American officers in Saigon panicked when a car backed up and started shooting wildly, killing five Vietnamese (and none was court-martialed), and in Somalia when American helicopter gunships killed dozens of Somalis peacefully.

It makes one appreciate the behaviour of the British Army in Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely  
NORMAN MOSS  
London, W12

### Nick's not for kids

From Mr Nicolas Walter  
Sir: John Rawlins makes three mistakes in his defence of Father Christmas (Letters, 6 December). He says that "pretending" is one of the joys of childhood; but in this case it is parents who have the joy of pretending and children who have the pain of finding out the truth. He says that no child ever suffered from the experience; but for many it is a considerable shock to learn that parents tell deliberate lies. And he says that if there is no God or heaven, it isn't wrong to tell lies; but it is wrong for humankind, not superhuman, reasons.

Yours faithfully,  
NICOLAS WALTER  
Rationalist Press Association  
London, N1

### Too much defence, too little industry

From Mr Frank Allaur  
Sir: Congratulations to the *Independent* on printing at considerable length Britain's chief scientist's "savage attack on UK arms industry" (report, 1 December). This important news received no coverage at all in nearly all the other newspapers.

The President of the Royal Society, Sir Michael Atiyah, condemned our huge expenditure on nuclear and conventional weapons on economic grounds and for the waste of resources involved, not to mention the moral objection, which is still more serious.

The House of Commons Research Section (5 April 1995) informed Labour MP Harry Cohen that if our arms spending were reduced as a proportion of GNP to the average of the other European Nato nations, it would save no less than £7.6bn a year. That would provide a tremendous boost to education, housing, the NHS and social security.

Further, the British government devotes no less than 42 per cent of its research to "defence" (compared with 5 per cent in Japan). It is unsurprising that Japan has been able to conquer the world market in electronics,

television, radio, motor cycles, motor cars, and even heavy engineering (such as shipbuilding).

Despite the ending of the Cold War, the Ministry of Defence is this year spending £23bn, money that is needed for pressing civil causes.

For six consecutive years Labour's annual conference delegates have carried a resolution stating that Britain's share of the gross national product going to the military should be reduced to the average proportion of the other European Nato governments and that there should be conversion of those armament factories concerned to non-military production.

Each year the Labour leadership has either ignored that decision or has publicly and brutally rebutted it. Yet the annual delegate conference is our party's supreme policy-making body. This year the executive dodged debating the issue at all (because they knew that it would again be carried).

This kind of treatment, if continued, will destroy the party's democracy.

Yours sincerely,  
FRANK ALLAUR  
President  
Labour Action for Peace  
Manchester  
1 December

### Talking about MS

From Mr Peter Cardy  
Sir: Jo Brand does not have it quite right in saying Stuart Henry did not tell people he had multiple sclerosis (Diary, 2 December). In 1982, when his speech had become noticeably affected, Stuart did indeed make his illness known to Radio Luxembourg listeners, and the station launched an appeal for the work of

the Multiple Sclerosis Society. With his colleague Tony Prince and friends from the music business, Stuart was instrumental in organising concerts in London to raise funds. These inspired many of his admirers to stage events to the benefit of the society.

Yours faithfully,  
PETER CARDY  
Chief Executive  
Multiple Sclerosis Society  
London, SW6

### Sheep, cattle and CJD

From Mr Les Galloway  
Sir: We are told that BSE is a form of scrapie that entered the cattle population through feed contaminated with infected sheep offal. If this is the case, then obviously the disease can cross between species and, therefore, potentially infect humans. The difficulty with this hypothesis is that there is no need to postulate cattle as an intermediate step. Scrapie has been endemic among the sheep population for generations, and if it were going to cross species with any ease, then we should have heard much more about mad sheep disease in the past, and the incidence of Kreutzfeldt-Jacob disease would be much greater.

The question that this generates can be phrased in two ways. If it is safe to eat sheep, then why should it not be safe to eat cattle? Alternatively, if it is a risk involved in eating cattle, why is the risk not even greater in eating sheep?

Yours faithfully,  
LES GALLOWAY  
Leicester  
5 December

From Dr H. C. Grant, FRCP

Sir: "We need an independent assessment of the dangers posed to humans by BSE in cattle" (leading article, 6 December). Quite. And the soothing official voices heard on the subject today are, directly or indirectly, employed by the Government or the meat industry.

Being retired, I am independent, and as a neuropathologist I spent about 30 years in London's hospitals teaching about the pathology of brain diseases, including CJD. I deal in facts. Facts are what the public are not getting and facts are what they need to help them decide whether to eat beef or not. Here are some facts:

1. BSE, CJD and scrapie (the disease in sheep that infected cattle between 1981 and 1988) are all caused by the same sinister

and almost indestructible agent. Experiments carried out on scrapie since the last war reveal that it is easy to transmit to many mammals, including primates.

2. The oft-repeated official statement that BSE cannot cause CJD is incorrect. Correct is: "It is not known whether BSE can cause CJD." And we will not know until about 2005 AD: if the number of CJD cases in the UK then suddenly jumps by, say, a factor of 10, we shall know.

3. It is the brain that is infective - even in (outwardly healthy) animals that are incubating the disease. Adult cattle brains were banned from our "meat products" (meat pies, pâtés, stock cubes and tinned items) in November 1989 but calves' brains were and still are exempt although calves may be born incubating BSE.

4. Unlike cattle brains, sheep' brains were never removed from the skull in the abattoirs to be added to our foods. That is why we have not had much bother with scrapie-infected meat over the centuries.

Yours faithfully,  
H. C. GRANT  
London, NW3  
6 December

From Mr Brian P. James

Sir: I cannot see much sense in the removal of beef from school dinner menus ("Parents win a schools ban on beef in 'mad cow alert'", 6 December) while continuing to provide custard, cheese and ice-cream, all made from that intimate bovine body fluid, milk. We know little about the mysterious BSE agent apparently, except that it is not destroyed by any pasteurisation process, no matter how aggressive. Is Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, quite happy about this, too?

Yours faithfully,  
BRIAN P. JAMES  
Maidenhead,  
Berkshire  
6 December

### Queen Mother's example for all

From Dr Kyvelle Papas, MD  
Sir: I believe that if the Queen Mother - to whom I sincerely wish a speedy recovery and many happy, mobile and pain-free years - is, very rightly at 95 years of age, entitled to a hip operation, then no health authority in this country has the right to refuse life-saving or pain-freeing treatment to anyone on the grounds of age, while still maintaining that it serves a National Health Service.

Yours faithfully,  
KYVELLE PAPAS  
London, W2  
6 December

### Vive la France, vive la révolution

From Mr Ian Flintoff  
Sir: Thank God for France! They are a people who believe that the first priority of government must be the well-being of the population, and that it is around this aim that national politics and economics must somehow be shaped and honed.

How different from the timorous and docile British. For 10 years, economic theorists have declared war on their immediate interests, reduced thousands to paralysed squalor, and taken possession of the only political instrument that might have defended them - but didn't - the Labour Party.

The greatest failure in Britain today is not the social and economic divide, or class, or the greed of the boardroom - it is the docility, subservience, and submission of the British people themselves.

Yours sincerely,  
IAN FLINTOFF  
London, SW6

From Mr Lionel M. Rediff

Sir: Will 1995 make 1789 look like 1968? Yours sincerely,  
LIONEL REDIFF  
London, N2



# Rebels come from every direction

Labour's left could cause trouble for a Blair government – but he might gain unexpected support

However disdainful the country may feel about politicians, surely no one can feel anything but slack-jawed admiration for the achievements of Tony Blair's spin doctors.

On Tuesday night, on the Budget vote, there was a Labour rebellion when some left-wing MPs voted against the Chancellor's tax cuts, rather than abstaining as they had been told to. Yesterday morning, this was hailed on television and radio as a personal triumph for the Labour leader.

It was a small rebellion, admittedly, and income tax is a particularly sensitive issue for the left – but a revolt is a revolt. Ten disobedient MPs is surely a mild embarrassment? There were, after all, fewer whippers than Tory rebels. Yet the general mood was, in *Private Eye* speak, large ones all round. Senior Shadow Cabinet people were talking of this as a turning point in Labour history. Well, as I say, there is no arguing with success. Hats off to Clive Campbell.

But are the implications that the hard left is now in effect dead – that the internal socialist challenge which has been a fact of life for all Labour leaders since the Fifties finally gone for ever? Persuading the public of this is extremely important for Blair as he sells Britain "new Labour". It may have been long ago, but memories of the Bennite uprising and union militancy are still fresh in the minds of many voters.

And the truth is that he has a compelling story to tell. It isn't only that the Campaign Group, formed in 1982, has never looked weaker. The hard left has always been weak in Parliament. It is more that the political and trade-

union culture that allowed Labour leftism to flourish has largely disappeared. The proliferation of leftist groups inside the Labour Party, the moral force of CND during the Cold War, the powerful union shop stewards' committee and the culture of industrial confrontation that gave all left-wing MPs their weekly cause and rally point – it has mostly gone.

The changes to the Labour Party pushed through by Neil Kinnock, John Smith and Tony Blair amount to a counter-revolution, which stripped away all the power centres built up by the left, virtually dismantling the annual conference as a serious policy-making event. The National Executive Committee, where once the hard left were the biggest group, has dwindled in significance. Real policy is decided by the leadership, in private; at times it seems that Labour policy on any given subject is simply what Tony Blair says it is.

All of this puts left-wing Labour MPs in a different position from the Bennites, Tribunes and Campaign Groups of earlier years. Some of them can still pack meetings. But by comparison with previous generations of leftists they are isolated figures. Many are getting on in years. The 10 rebels this week have an average age of 57, two are in their seventies, and the two youngest are in their mid-forties. It was hardly a teenage revolt.

Benn himself, now 70, remains the ablest and most interesting left-winger, and has a status and following independent of the fortunes of the left generally. In the Commons, his interventions on everything from procedure to the Bosnian conflict still draw MPs into the chamber – not something you



ANDREW MARR  
Columnist of the Year

The average age of the rebels was 57. It was hardly a teenage revolt

can say about any other member. Nice though it must be to have achieved guru status, however, it is a comedown from the days when he was poised to take over the Labour Party. If you want to change the world, the last thing you need from the British parliament is its affection.

One could reasonably conclude from all this that the Labour left really is dead. Some senior Labour people certainly think that. One senior Shadow Cabinet member reckons that all but nine or ten of the current Campaign Group are "biddable" – keen for government office.

But it would be foolish for Labour modernisers to relax entirely. Pre-election politics is an unreliable guide to life in office. A leftist MP who attacks the leadership now would be accused of damaging the party's chances of ending 18 years of Tory rule. Under a Labour government with a decent majority, that pressure comes

off a bit. Rebellion would become glamorous again. As the Tory Maastricht rebels discovered, media enthusiasm for vivid quotes from dissident MPs on the Westminster lawn is insatiable. The airtime and coverage gives any consistent, eloquent rebel a greater status in the country and better access to voters than the average minister of state – and without the paperwork.

So I think that if a Blair Cabinet is locked in confrontation with nurses, teachers or local government staff, it is reasonable to assume that the parliamentary left will rediscover its instincts. However discouraging Blair and Gordon Brown are now, there will be a time of inflated expectations and then of expectation dashed. There will be arguments about Europe and Scotland.

This is why Blair's compelling story is also an unfinished story. So far ahead, the size and danger of such rebellions are impossible to predict. But that they will happen is predictable.

And, in a way, they need to. The Commons is already grossly unrepresentative of the variety of British opinions – for instance, there is not a single well-known environmentalist MP, which is pretty bizarre. That is part of Parliament's problem. The less dissidence and conversation it contains, the less the Commons as an institution matters. Voting reform would mean a wider variety of opinions daring to express themselves.

Until then, however, I suspect that we will see more, not less, fracturing of party discipline as MPs respond to the market for alternative voices.

So there is a question about the extent to which Blair could achieve all

his centralist, pro-European and reformist ambitions for office on the basis of iron discipline. He clearly wants to. He is trying to forge a hard-edged parliamentary force to sustain him for 10 years or more. But even the Tories have found this discipline increasingly difficult. So what if it isn't possible?

I was very struck recently by hearing a mainstream centralist Tory MP speculate about what would happen if his party lost the 1997 election and chose, in his words, a "Portillo-type leader". He would not leave the Conservatives, he said. He had been in the party too long to do that. But he and his friends might act as a "disloyal opposition". If Blair proposed something on Europe or economic policy that they thought good for the country, they would be likely to back him against his own left wing than to follow the Tory nationalist leader in the lobby against him.

An outlandish thought I know. Yet if small groups of leftists can vote against the party line, so can others. Is it impossible to imagine Blair riding different voting coalitions in the Commons on different issues, countering leftist rebellions on, say, constitutional votes by using Liberal Democrat support and turning at other times to pro-European Tories?

That is a kind of politics we can scarcely imagine today. It would return the Commons to the time before it was dominated by rigidly predictable two-party whipping. It would create a more fluid and more interesting parliamentary politics. And it would be, to use Blair's phrase of the moment, impeccably One Nation.

## TGVs, baguettes and class war

At this very moment the French nation is tearing itself apart over the question of social welfare. Canada, which has perhaps the worst deficit and debt problems of all the top nations, is seriously worried over the level of spending on welfare and is thinking of drastic steps to reduce it. It will come as no surprise to anyone to learn that our own government is running scared about the amount it spends on the welfare state, and that the US administration is in the same mood.

All through the Western world, regimes are taking a good hard look at the huge amount of money they are paying on people who need it, but who don't seem to deserve it.

The poor and the needy, in other words. "Yes, I'm afraid so," sighs Professor Jean-Paul Suture, visiting French history expert at the University of Wessex. "The unspoken agreement that prosperous governments should look after their poorer constituents is beginning to break down. The more people clamour for attention, the less likely they are to get it. That is what the struggle in France is all about at the moment."

But surely this has always gone on: students have always fought for more grants, the unemployed have fought for more benefits, the homeless have always demanded a roof?

"It's true. What is different is that governments are beginning to turn round and put two fingers up at them. And governments are beginning to put into practice their own secret solutions."

Could Professor Suture perhaps elaborate on that?

"Certainly," says Professor Suture, sliding back in his chair, propping two fingers under his chin and looking every inch a professor about to deliver a world-shaking message. "Think of my native France again for a moment. Here we have one of the most civilised nations in the world. Yet from time to time it is thrown into the utmost paroxysm of change. Two hundred years ago, we had the French Revolution. Then we had an empire. Then we had the kings back. Then we threw the kings out and became a republic. Then... but you get my point. France is capable of violent change, non?"

Out.

"Now, tell me what happened in the French Revolution."

They cut the king's head off? "Yes, but that by itself is not revolutionary. After all, you English cut your king's head off in 1648, but 12 years later everything was back to normal. You never really had a revolution. What happened in the French Revolution of true significance was that they also cut the aristocrats' heads off. It was

an attempt to get rid of an entire class of person. The aristocrats had too much money, too much power. Ergo, get rid of the aristocrats, keep the power and the money."

I don't see what that has to do with today.

"Today the problem is not the aristocrats. It is the poor."

Yes, but you can't get rid of the poor the way you could the aristocrats!

"You think not?" says Professor Suture, raising his eyebrows. "You must not get me wrong, my friend. I am not in favour of eliminating the poor. It has many overtones which I do not like. But you must admit that it is an idea which must appeal to many people in power."

"Pensez-y, mon ami. You are running a country. Every day you are spending billions of pounds on people who do no work and pay no taxes. To begin with, you feel sorry for them. To end up, you feel mad with them. If only they were not there!"



MILES KINGTON

"Then you get the secret thought: maybe... maybe get rid of them."

But how would that be possible? Surely there would be an outcry if it started to happen?

"It has started already, mon ami. The amount of deaths on the roads goes up. The amount of new diseases goes up. The amount of bombs being exploded in Paris goes up. Pollution, mad cow disease, Aids... all these things are part of a conspiracy to cut down the population."

"Of course, it is really war that reduces population best, but wars are very expensive. They are not cost-effective. Accidents and disease are so much better in the long run."

The professor really thinks this is happening in France?

"If it happens at all, it must happen in France. I love you, mon ami, the French are much better at getting things done. That is why we have a TGV and you do not. That is why we have a nuclear programme. Think of the difference in our national anthems. 'The Marseillaise' is aggressive and revolutionary and calls for change. 'God Save the Queen' demands for everything to stay the way it is."

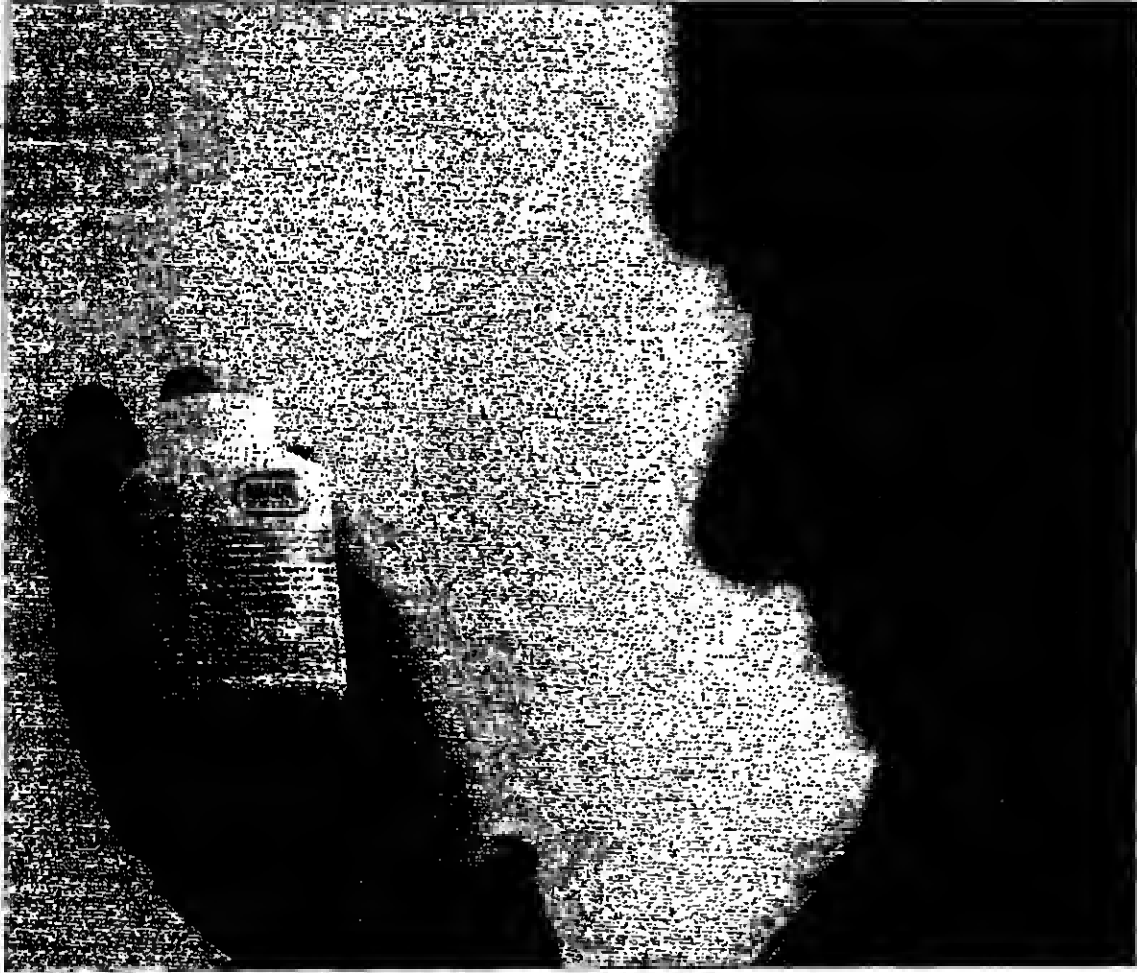
"Yes, I think France will be there first. But I must not say any more. Wait till you see my deeply troubling series on Channel 4, *Adieu, Les Patriotes*."

I can't wait.

In an ever more complex world, literate adults are crucial to economic performance and social cohesion

## An overdose of illiteracy

Can you read the label on an aspirin bottle, and understand that you should not take the medicine for longer than a week? Good, you are at the minimum level of adult literacy. Now try the weather report published in this paper and work out the difference in the temperature yesterday between Tokyo and Hong Kong. If you can manage that, you are at least at grade two – but sadly between 10 and 20 per cent of the population of a typical developed country could not. Now think of a *Which?* report, say the double-page spread this month ranking different camcorders. Only 10 to 20 per cent of the people in a typical developed country would understand



The painful truth: one in five American adults can just about read an aspirin label and not much more

Now there is. A new study, *Literacy, Economy and Society*, was yesterday published by the OECD in Paris. It looks at seven countries – the US, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and Poland – ranking adult literacy on a common basis. No, Britain did not take part, though we will in the future, and a pilot study is showing interesting results. And France was not included either. More about that in a moment. First, how did the study work?

The idea was not to set an exam, but to look at the extent to which people could correctly interpret the various documents they meet from day to day. The organisers took a sample of 2,000 to 3,000 people in each country and questioned them about the same sort of document, in their own language, and taken from their own culture.

The questions were graded by difficulty, one to five: the one on the

aspirin label ranked as one, the one on a newspaper weather map as two, and a complicated question on the consumer report would be four or five.

The study looked at three sorts of literacy. One was prose: just words. Like the aspirin label. A second was document literacy, where there were words and figures – an airline timetable or a *Which?* report. The third was quantitative literacy, where in addition to reading, the reader had to make a simple calculation, such as working out the difference in temperature in two cities on the weather map.

So who did best? The clear overall winner was Sweden, with both the largest proportion of people in the top grades and the smallest in the lowest. But even in Sweden about a third of the population would not be able to fill out a simple stationery requisition form. Aside from poor Poland, which came

bottom on just about every measure, the worst results at the lower end of the scale came from the US. About 20 per cent of its adult population could just about manage an aspirin bottle label but not much more.

However at the top end Americans (and Canadians) did very well, almost as well as the Swedes, and better than the Germans, Swiss or Dutch.

How might we fare? Well, there are only pilot studies so far and the results are not out yet. Common sense suggests that we will be somewhere between North America and Sweden; in the middle of the European pack.

But one point which has emerged is that Britons seem to take a lot of care in answering the questions, taking more time than any other nationality. Since a lot of the questions need a bit of care, we may come out rather better than we might expect.

This is in contrast to the French,

who did take part in the main study until quite a late stage. But it seems that the French dashed off the answers with Gallic flair and self-confidence – only to get them wrong.

Cynics believe that the reason the French withdrew from the study was because they seemed to be doing so badly. Before anyone crows at French discomfort, they should be aware that our own resistance to joining may have been because we were worried that Britain would not show up too well.

But this really ought not to be about national league tables, fascinating though they may be. There are much bigger issues here.

First, we put a great deal of energy

We have a string of qualifications not relevant to future life. This must be nuts

into consumer labelling on food products, supposedly to enable consumers to know how much fat/fibre/chemicals they contain. But if two-thirds of the population cannot understand these, what is the point? (Working out the percentage of calories in a Big Mac hamburger that came from fat was one of the most difficult tasks on the whole scale.)

Second, there are clearly things that can be done to improve adult literacy. If people read a lot, or write letters, they become better at it. By contrast, those who watch the most television in every single country are the worst readers. So anything that encourages people to read more will help them to read better. If you have reached this point in this article, take a bow.

Third, and most important, is the question of whether there should be a new qualification for adult literacy. It is not the same as educational achievement. Obviously there is a relationship between the two, but there were plenty of people with limited educational achievements who did very well in the tests and a few people with wonderful degrees who did very badly.

Most employers need people who can read and write well, and can add up. They are less interested in whether 10 years earlier they achieved three A's at A-level and an Upper Second in Classical Civilisation. So we have a string of qualifications that are not relevant to future life and not one single one that is. This must be nuts.

HAMISH McRAE

it well enough to answer correctly complicated questions on it.

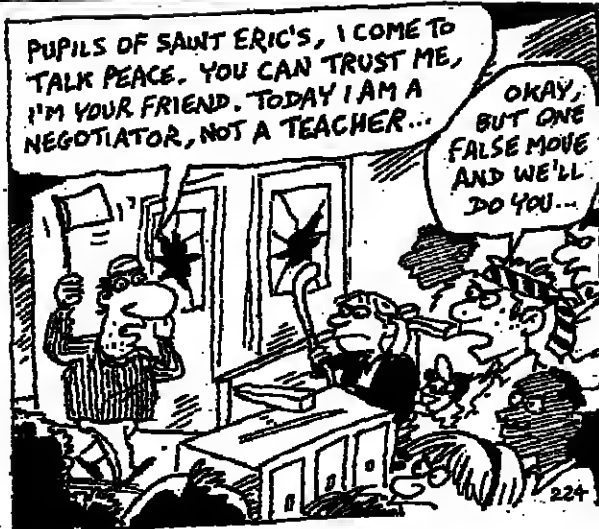
In our daily lives we face a string of ever more complicated reading, writing and arithmetical tasks. Labels on food carry more information, consumer goods have increasingly complicated manuals, and as for a credit-card application form, you need a degree in economics and consumer law and you would still miss something.

Part of the problem is that many instructions are "written" by people who cannot write. But even allowing for this, the fact remains that in the workplace the demands for literacy are rising, so that many people find themselves excluded from the middle and upper levels of their organisations.

The problem is widely recognised: witness, for example, this week's statement on education from the Labour Party. *Excellence for All*. Adult literacy is crucial not only to economic performance, but also to social cohesion; for the more complicated society becomes, the greater the proportion of people who will be marginalised.

Yet until today there was no study comparing adult literacy in different developed nations. There were figures on academic credentials: numbers of people getting diplomas or degrees. And there were crude measures of performance of schoolchildren: how they performed in standard maths tests, for example. But there was nothing on how well adults could read the things they needed to in their daily lives.

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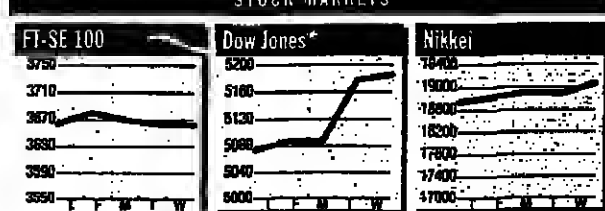
### Foreign Exchange Rates

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## MARKET SUMMARY

## STOCK MARKETS



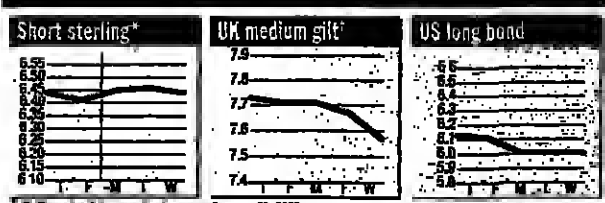
Index	Close	Day's change	Change %	1995 High	1995 Low	YTD %
FTSE 100	3662.80	-1.40	-0.04	3680.40	2954.20	3.92
FTSE 250	3569.90	-1.40	-0.04	3591.30	3300.90	3.49
FTSE 350	1814.30	-1.50	-0.1	1821.50	931.00	3.83
FT Small Cap	1950.89	-3.32	-0.2	1953.11	1878.61	3.31
FT All Share	1788.24	-1.80	-0.1	1794.95	1489.23	3.79
New York	5185.76	+8.31	+0.2	5185.76	4693.70	2.30
Tokyo	19067.86	+188.33	+1.0	19684.04	14485.41	0.79
Hong Kong	9988.89	-76.48	-0.8	10032.93	8967.93	3.85
Frankfurt	2267.18	+6.19	+0.3	2317.01	1910.96	1.98
Paris	1834.75	+19.88	+1.1	2017.27	1700.58	3.27
Milan	8890.00	+133.00	+1.5	9911.00	8757.00	1.82

\*New York Index &amp; Graph at 1300 hours 1995/96 World Index YTD

## MAIN PRICE CHANGES

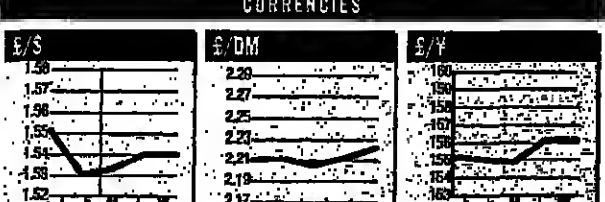
Index	Price	Change	% Change
Berlford	190	17	9.8
Infocap	217	19	8.1
Infocap Hse	28.3	1.8	6.8
NFC	139	10	6.7
Smith (DS)	266	12	4.7
Celltech Group	579	21	3.5
STP	271	12	4.6
Chubb Security	314	11	3.4
Scottia Hldgs	599	24	4.2
London Ind	127	4	3.1

## INTEREST RATES



Index	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Term	Long Term	10 Year
UK	8.63	6.31	7.37	8.57	7.54
US	5.88	5.41	5.63	7.81	5.98
Japan	0.28	0.38	2.67	4.61	-
Germany	4.19	3.81	8.04	7.40	6.38

## CURRENCIES



Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
\$ (London)	1.5403	-0.02c	1.5644
£ (London)	0.6492	0.01	0.639
DM (London)	1.5425	-0.10c	1.5660
¥ (London)	154.25	-0.02c	156.75
¥ (London)	154.25	-0.02c	156.75
¥ (London)	154.25	-0.02c	156.75

Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
Oil Brent	17.59	+0.07	15.91
RPI	149.8	+3.2pc	2.4 14 Dec
Gold	388.40	+1.65	376.3
Gold	252.16	+1.1240	587

## OTHER INDICATORS

Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
Oil Brent	17.59	+0.07	15.91
RPI	149.8	+3.2pc	2.4 14 Dec
Gold	388.40	+1.65	376.3
Gold	252.16	+1.1240	587

## IN BRIEF

**Payout for former Post Office chief**  
Bill Cockburn, the former chief executive of the Post Office who left to join WH Smith last month, has received a lump sum of £285,542 from his previous employer. In a response to a Labour Party question in the House of Commons, the Government said the payment was allowed under the Post Office pension rules and was equivalent to three times his annual pension.

**Vymura issues warning**  
Vymura, the wallpaper manufacturer, warned that second-half profits will be "substantially below" last year's level. Trading has been hit by a combination of flat sales, difficulties in recovering raw material price increases and higher support costs, the company said. However, subject to the trading outlook in spring 1996, it remains Vymura's intention to maintain the level of final dividend for the full year 1995.

**Littlewoods fight to continue**  
Barry Dale, the former Littlewoods chief executive who has launched a £1.2bn offer for the company, has vowed to fight on if he loses a crucial vote on his proposals today. The Moores family, which controls the company, is due to vote on his offer at an emergency meeting at the company's head office in Liverpool. Although Mr Dale has some support he is expected to lose the vote that would allow him access to the company's books. A rival £1.1bn offer from Mr Brown, the mail order group, and Iceland, the frozen food retailer, is also expected to be discussed.

**Boost for Kingfisher**  
Sales at Kingfisher, the B&Q and Superdrug group, have risen by 4.8 per cent on a like-for-like basis in the three months to October. Woolworths sales have recovered after a poor August. Sales at Comet were up by 3 per cent but B&Q is finding the market tougher. Its sales were flat as a result of the sluggish housing market. Superdrug is performing better as it continues to move more towards health and beauty products.

**Hard marketing lifts car sales**  
New UK car sales leapt by 12.77 per cent to 143,055 vehicles last month - but manufacturers said the increase reflected aggressive marketing rather than a sudden return of the "feel-good" factor. It was the second month running to show an increase, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

**No fresh runway plans from BAA**  
BAA, the airports operator, has no plans or proposals for another runway in south-east England within its present planning horizons, Michael Maine, technical director, told MPs on the Select Transport Committee yesterday. He told the meeting that the proposed terminal 5 at Heathrow would be "the correct answer to the UK airport capacity question". Mr Maine also encouraged the Government to encourage greater use of other UK airports including Luton and Stansted.

**Taylor moves in at Charter**  
Martin Taylor, the recently retired vice-chairman of Hanson, has been appointed deputy chairman of Charter, the welding supplies to mining equipment group. The move follows April's announcement that Sir Michael Edwards was to step down as chairman of Charter next year, to be replaced by Jeffrey Herbert, currently chief executive.

## Forte's defence bill could exceed £35m

JOHN SHEPHERD

The beleaguered Forte hotels group is continuing to recruit more advisers, and looks set to run up a defence bill of more than £35m in its struggle to defeat the hostile £3.5bn takeover bid from Granada.

Since Sunday, Forte, headed by Sir Rocco Forte, has enlisted additional help from Roberto Mendoza, vice president of JP Morgan, and Cazenove, the blue-blooded stockbroker. Makinson Cowell, the investor relations specialists, was yesterday

drafted into the defence team. One leading merchant banker, who requested not to be named, estimated the cost of Forte's army of defenders at a "conservative" £35m. "That may well rise considerably if Forte remains independent and has to pay success fees," he said.

The defence team also includes two other merchant banks, SBC Warburg and Morgan Stanley, the UBS stockbroker firm, and Brunswick, the City public relations firm. The merchant banker reckoned that the merchant banks and stock-

brokers would cost Forte between £25m and £30m, excluding expenses. "Accountants and solicitors would cost at least £2m to £3m. Brunswick £1m, and Makinson Cowell another £500,000." Forte is also having its hotel estate revalued which he estimated would cost around £1m.

Forte declined to comment on how much its defence would cost. If £35m is an accurate figure it equates to about 27 per cent of Forte's taxable profits of £127m in the last full year.

IBCA, the credit rating agency, yesterday expressed concern about Forte in the wake of the company's plan to split into two should it defeat Granada. The agency said it had placed long and short-term debt ratings of Forte on "rating watch" with negative implications.

## Crunch day as Eggar steps into gas row

MARY FAGAN

The Government will today step into the row between British Gas and its potential rivals. It has summoned British Gas to a crunch meeting that will include the industry watchdog, Clare Spottiswoode, following allegations in the industry that the company is dragging its heels over the introduction of domestic competition in April next year.

Cedric Brown, chief executive of British Gas, may also attend in an attempt to resolve the issue. Competitors to British Gas, including North Sea producers and electricity companies, believe that British Gas is deliberately trying to delay competition on the grounds that the arrangements needed to cope with multiple suppliers will not be in place.



Keeping a grip: Steve Wilcox, chief executive (right), and Hamish McPhie, finance director, of Avon Rubber, the automotive components to tyres group that has motored ahead despite some weakening in its markets. Pre-tax profits jumped from £13.2m to £16.2m in the year to September. The dividend rises 7 per cent to 17.7p.

## Six sink in Footsie shake-up

TOM STEVENSON

Deputy City Editor  
Six companies learned yesterday that they have lost their coveted status in the FT-SE 100 in the biggest shake-up for two years in the index of Britain's leading shares. Victims of the Stock Exchange's strict formula for inclusion slip out of the Footsie on 18 December when they will face a wave of selling pressure from tracker funds whose portfolios are designed to reflect exactly movements in the various indices.

The number of changes in the latest quarterly review was boosted by the Exchange's decision to remove Inchcape, the lowest-ranked company in the index, to accommodate the inclusion of the National Grid, which will be a FT-SE 100 company from the start of dealings on Monday. Inchcape's departure, after four years in the index, follows a disastrous share price performance which left it as only the 130th-largest quoted company.

A side effect of the flotation of the Grid has been the removal of both London and Midlands Electricity, whose market values have been hit by the transfer to shareholders of their stakes in the electricity transmission business. Other

companies to drop out include Sears, one of the original constituents when Footsie was devised in 1984. Despite the best efforts of the chief executive, Liam Strogg, Sears has struggled with a disparate array of retail brands. Arjo Wiggins also falls out, as does De La Rue, which fell foul of investors last week after it warned that higher-than-forecast results in the past had fuelled unrealistic expectations.



Tim Eggar: Determined to increase competition

by Tim Eggar, the minister for energy and industry, who is determined that competition for up to 500,000 households in the South-west of England will be available from 1 April. It will then be extended to two million homes in 1997, with the market open nationally in 1998.

Ms Spottiswoode, who is believed to be increasingly angered by British Gas's attitude, is also likely to oppose vociferously any slippage in the timetable. According to one industry source: "When politics and companies get mixed, who knows what the outcome will be. This is likely to be a very important meeting."

The row primarily involves the British Gas pipeline subsidiary, Transco, whose relationship with

## Liquidators want Leeson in court

DAVID HELLIER

The liquidators of Nick Leeson's former employer, Baring Futures Singapore, said yesterday they want the disgraced trader to appear in court to disclose all his assets.

A partner in the liquidators, Price Waterhouse, said the firm's solicitors, Rajah and Tann, wrote on Tuesday to Tanah Merah, where Nick Leeson is being held, for permission to serve him a court order. Price Waterhouse originally investigated the collapse of

BFS on behalf of the Singapore authorities and produced a wide-ranging report on the affair. It was appointed liquidator two weeks ago.

The order is similar to one served on Leeson's British lawyer, Stephen Pollard, on Saturday, shortly after the court case in which the former trader was sentenced to six and a half years in prison on two charges of cheating linked to the failure of Barings. The order requires Mr Pollard to produce all documents linked to the bank's collapse - including those which

## Promising statement lifts Rank

DAVID HELLIER

Shares in Rank Organisation were up sharply after the company released an upbeat trading statement. The company said sales in continuing operations were up more than 5 per cent and operating profit was 11 per cent higher in the first 10 months compared with a year earlier.

## Gilt auction setback for Bank of England

PAUL WALLACE

Economics Editor  
The Bank of England received another setback in its auction programme as bidders put in aggressively low offers and the total volume of bids barely exceeded the £3bn of gilts being sold. However, the gilt market later recovered on hopes of an early cut in interest rates, buoyed by weak industrial production figures.

The difference in the auction between the average yield and the highest yield accepted, the "tail", was the largest on record. The average accepted yield was 7.45 per cent, the highest 7.56 per cent, a "tail" of 11 basis points.

"The Bank had to mop up a lot of silly bids," said Nigel Richardson, head of bond research at Yamaichi International. The Bank put a brave face on the reverse, saying that the dis-

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## Binder judgment underlines case for reform

### COMMENT

This is the nightmare scenario that accountants and their insurance brokers have been predicting for much of this decade.

The accountancy profession will hardly welcome it, but yesterday's £65m judgment against Binder Hamlyn is the best piece of evidence it can point to in its campaign for a change in the law relating to auditors' liability. Here is the nightmare scenario that accountants and their insurance brokers have been predicting for much of this decade. Because of a shortfall in the firm's professional indemnity insurance cover - caused by insurers' unwillingness to take on such big risks in the face of mounting litigation - more than 100 partners face having to meet £34m of the claim. The judgment is being appealed, but if a year from now it stands, some prominent accountants might be made personally bankrupt.

Well, almost. This case is complicated by the fact that much of Binder Hamlyn has, since late 1994, been part of the immensely successful US-based Arthur Andersen. Having acquired it because of its UK audit business, Arthur Andersen is unlikely to want to cast the Binder people off. But nor, as rival firms were quick to point out, is it likely to dip into its pocket to bail them out. That would, in the words of one partner at another practice, be a "more than generous gesture". Ultimately, ADT would probably be better off agreeing a deal under which the money is paid off over time, rather than forcing the partners out of homes and callings.

The wider implications are somewhat easier to assess. Irrespective of the final result, the case can only accelerate the rush

to incorporate begun earlier this year by KPMG, Britain's largest audit firm. Indeed, the signs are that the coming weeks, if not days, will see many other leading firms delivering their responses to KPMG's attempt to protect itself from huge negligence suits in this way.

There are still doubts over how KPMG's decision to incorporate only its audit arm will work. If Binder had been totally incorporated at the time of the deal that landed it in court, the liability would have been limited to the firm's assets, and the individual partner responsible, rather than scores of others with no connection to the transaction. Even this may be no more than a partial solution, however.

With this case fresh in its mind, the profession will be hoping that the Law Commission, which is studying options for reform of the law of joint and several liability, might provide a more elegant way out of the problem. It has long pressed changes to a principle under which its members can find themselves hearing the whole cost of a corporate disaster.

### Cold comfort from Chancellor Kohl

The only good thing from Jacques Chirac's point of view about his meeting today with Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, has to be its the venue. The French presi-

dent, who has been watching Paris burn from the distant vantage point of Benin, will be sorely tempted by the diversions of Baden-Baden. Perhaps a little birching in the sauna before taking the waters, or a flutter at the tables - anything but having to subject himself to Helmut's stern gaze.

Around the time of their last meeting, the Germans had privately begun referring to France as the "patient". It was this sort of talk that finally prompted Mr Chirac to declare, after months of slyly-shuffling, that cutting the public deficit was his priority of priorities. Now the priority is being acted upon, and the patient is in high fever. But Mr Chirac is likely to look in vain for any meaningful act of sympathy. He will get, of course, the solemn affirmation of Franco-German solidarity on everything, which in any case is always recycled as a matter of course at these summits.

On substance, however, Mr Kohl can afford to be at his most self-righteous. Despite the burden of unification, equivalent to transferring to the east each year some 5 per cent of GDP, Germany has succeeded, through the recession of 1993 and 1994, in driving down its public deficit to below the Maastricht criteria level. France and Britain, in more favourable economic conditions, have failed to achieve as much. Kenneth Clarke has just pushed back his deficit reduction timetable by another year, so that Britain should come in under the 3 per cent bar in 1997.

President Chirac, however, has less room for such slight of hand - stepping up to the mark on EMU is a matter of honour, and the pressure of international market scrutiny is that much greater on France. The biggest problem is that the French economy is crawling along on annualised GDP growth of under 1 per cent, and unemployment is rising again: hardly ideal fundamentals for deficit-slashing. That was the whole point of the convergence criteria. They were not meant to offer choice, just Teutonic virtue.

### Bass's bigger splash proves a winner

It has taken a long time for the City to come around to Sir Ian Prosser's view of the world, but finally he seems to be winning over the sceptics. Over the past year, Bass shares have outperformed the rest of the stock market by around a tenth: support for the stock is growing by leaps and bounds. It was not always thus. When it splashed out more than £1bn on the Holiday Inn hotel chain in 1989, there were cries of horror. Why on earth was a brewer expanding into hotels, was the question on everyone's lips.

Bass's approach to the beer orders - to sell most of its tied estate as rapidly as possible - drew an equally hostile response. Both strategies are in the process of being vindicated. Holiday Inn is producing all the right numbers while the company's swift and

robust response to the beer orders has succeeded in wrong-footing most competitors.

There is still some residual doubt about whether such a powerful brewer should be expanding into the leisure industry as aggressively as Bass is, but even this is beginning to go. The main strands of the leisure market are rapidly converging. Sir Ian's vision of a company that tries to tap profitably into all aspects of discretionary spending and personal leisure time, be that pubs, bingo halls, betting shops or fitness centres, must be the right one. Bass is proving to be a master of extracting the last penny of loose change from customers' pockets. Selective bolt-on acquisitions - such as the recent purchase of the Harvester pub chain - have enriched the formula.

The ability to throw £10m of capital spending a week at existing businesses underlines the company's financial strength. The result of the high capital spending in the year to 30 September was an 11.3 per cent leap in taxable profits to £599m, despite the effects of the lottery. Analysts have pencilled in £650m for next year. With gearing at just 23 per cent, Bass plainly has scope for a big acquisition. Anything is possible, but the current rumour, Ladbroke, seems unlikely. Bass simply does not need hotel property assets like Ladbroke's. Much more logical would be Carlsberg. Tetley, but the rationalisation of the beer industry involved might be too much even for this Government's relaxed approach to mergers policy.

## NFC admits to failures as group profits collapse

TOM STEVENSON  
Deputy City Editor

NFC ate humble pie in the City yesterday, admitting that the group's potential had failed to be realised in all its divisions and acknowledging that one of the main challenges facing the new chief executive, Gerry Murphy, was a complete change of culture. The City fretted about the pace of reform, downgrading profits forecasts by £10m to £95m and knocking 10p, or 7 per cent, off the company's shares.

At 139p, the shares have more than halved since the beginning of last year, further tarnishing the employee co-operative dream that began with a workers' buyout from the government in 1982 and brought the company to the stock market three years later. After a honeymoon period in the early 1980s, falling profits and bitter boardroom rows have proven that NFC is just another company operating in cut-throat markets.

Figures for the 12 months to September, already struggling under tighter operating margins, were scarred by a £35m exceptional provision to cover overhead reductions, loss-making businesses and the write-off of

"non-performing assets". Mr Murphy, who took over at the top after the company had spent a fruitless six months looking for a new chief, said 1,000 jobs had gone since the restructuring began although these had been offset by recruitment in other areas of the business.

Mr Murphy replaced Peter Sherlock, who was similarly brought in by the company to restore its previous fortunes but fell foul of an old guard unwilling to carry through his radical recommendations. Yesterday's figures were presented as the result of the previous regime's mismanagement but attention is focused on how quickly Mr Murphy can transform the company.

He now runs a business that has in effect severed all links with the old ideal of a share-owning co-operative. In October, employee shareholders lost the double voting rights they had enjoyed since the flotation of the former National Freight Corporation.

The extra voting powers, designed to protect employees, were lost after their shareholding dipped below 10 per cent. At privatisation NFC workers and their families owned more than 80 per cent of the company.

Despite a 7 per cent rise in sales to £2.2bn, operating profits tumbled from £118m to £85.8m. After the £35m exceptional provision, most of which was actually used during the year, pre-tax profits collapsed from £105.6m to £38.6m. Earnings per share slid from 11.2p to 2p, failing to cover the maintained dividend of 7.1p.

Excel Logistics, the core UK third-party distribution arm, which accounts for almost half group sales, saw a 9 per cent slide in profits as new business wins from Milk Marque, British Steel and Thorn EMI failed to make up for tighter margins and the impact of a considerable management upheaval. The division had been broken up into 12 separately accountable and more manageable units responsible for supplying different industries.

Overseas, NFC's loss-making European operations fell deeper into the red, losing £10.1m compared with 1994's £4.8m deficit. In North America, profits halved to £14.7m as renewed business was struck at less attractive margins and the weak US housing market held back the moving services operation. The small rest-of-the-world business was a flat year-on-year.

Beat it: Coup shifts the power centre of beleaguered music business back to Japan



Flat spin: Michael Schulhof (left) with Michael Jackson at the signing agreement last month merging Jackson's Beatles' songs copyright with Sony's music catalogue

## Resignation puts Sony's US arm in doubt

DAVID USBORNE  
New York

The fate of Sony Corporation's struggling music and film studio interests in the US was up in the air yesterday after the sudden resignation of the head of its American operations for the past six years, Michael Schulhof.

Mr Schulhof, who engineered Sony's move into the entertainment industry at the end of the Eighties, was ousted from his position as president and chief executive of the Sony Corporation of America late on Tuesday. The removal of Mr Schulhof in effect shifts the power centre in Sony's US subsidiaries back from America to Sony headquarters in Japan. No successor has been named and Mr Schulhof's responsibilities will pass to management in Tokyo, led by Sony's new president, Nobuyuki Idei.

On Wall Street, meanwhile, speculation was rising that Sony may be tempted to find new investors for its film and music units or even unload them entirely. "It's more likely now that they'll spin off the movie and music operations," suggested Dennis McAlpine of Josephthal Lyon & Ross.

Mr Schulhof led Sony into the entertainment business, first

with the acquisition in 1988 of CBS Records for \$2bn and, a year later, with the \$5bn purchase of Columbia Pictures Entertainment Inc.

Analysts calculate that today the combined entertainment interests may be worth no more than \$8bn, not much more than the company's original investments.

Nor has Sony's foray into Hollywood been happy. Last year the company revealed that it had accumulated \$3.2bn in write-offs and losses in its movie studios. Although the film division has since picked up a little, it has had no big hits. Sony Music has also faced hard times recently, its share of the US market slipping to 13.6 per cent from 17.5 per cent in 1993. Most recently, it was hit by the disappointing performance of Michael Jackson's latest album, *HIStory*.

Mr Schulhof, 53, said he was leaving Sony because he wanted to "explore a new entrepreneurial role outside of the corporation and I am eager to get on with it".

Any attempt by Sony to draw in its horns in Hollywood would represent another chapter in the humbling of Japanese corporations faced with disappointing American investments.

## Carlton lays plans for cable

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Carlton Communications is planning a big push into cable and satellite broadcasting and overseas television. Already the largest supplier to the ITV network, the company intends to take advantage of new government rules on media ownership that allow it to own 100 per cent of cable and satellite channels, up from 20 per cent before.

Michael Green, chairman, said yesterday: "The multiplicity of entertainment channels that will be available to viewers with the expansion of broadcast, satellite and cable systems means that demand for programme material will grow substantially. We intend to be a major owner and supplier of copyright television material." A spokesman confirmed that the company had been talking to European media groups about possible joint ventures, but refused to rule out doing a deal with Rupert Murdoch's empire, which effectively controls a large part of UK satellite broadcasting.

As well as satellite, "there are well over 1 million cable subscribers and you have got the prospect of digital terrestrial TV", the spokesman said. "There are a range of options and we don't want to be tied to any particular one thing."

The company's ownership of the franchises for London weekday television and Central allowed it to raise pre-tax profits 30 per cent to £247m in the year to September. Stripping out a £7m loss on disposals, profits rose 39 per cent. The dividend goes up 14 per cent to 23.6p. Investment Column, page 26

## Bass keep City guessing on acquisition

JOHN SHEPHERD

Bass yesterday kept the City guessing about whether it was on the verge of making a large acquisition. The giant hotels and drinks group declined to comment on the strong speculation over the past week that it was considering a bid for Ladbroke, the betting shops and Hilton hotels company.

Sir Ian Prosser, chairman and chief executive, did hint, however, that Bass would be prepared to make a big bid if the right opportunity arose. Announcing better-than-expected

full-year profits of £599m, he said there would more than likely be further consolidation in the brewing industry in the wake of Scottish & Newcastle's recent acquisition of Courage.

Analysts interpreted that comment as a sign that Bass was interested in buying Carlsberg, the third-largest brewer, which is jointly owned by Allied Domecq and Carlsberg of Denmark.

A resurfacing of rumours that Sir Christopher Hogg is in line to succeed Michael Jackson as chairman of Allied Domecq also fuelled specula-

tion that Allied would eventually be broken up, starting with the sale of Carlsberg Tetley.

Sir Ian again declined to comment on this particular piece of speculation, but openly admitted that Bass was losing a small amount of market share in addition to being toppled from pole position in the brewing league by S&N.

However, he stressed that "size was not everything" and it was more important to grow strategically and through product innovation. The City inhibited that message fully yesterday and marked the

shares up 26p to a high of 695p.

Analysts upgraded forecasts on the news that Bass had increased pre-tax profits by 11.3 per cent to £599m in the year to 30 September and raised the dividend total by 7.6 per cent to 22.7p. The City expects Bass to make profits of about £650m in the current year and £710m in 1996/97.

The main driver behind the profit growth was the franchised Holiday Inns business, which operates 2,080 hotels with 370,000 rooms. Operating profits from the hotels climbed

8.6 per cent to £164m. A further 487 hotels will be added to the chain in the next 18 months, most of them in the US.

The company's brewing and pub operations also had a good year, with operating profits from pubs up from £220m to £240m, and brewing profits improved from £140m to £144m.

But the bot summer and the effect of the National Lottery hit the leisure operations. Gaming clubs saw profits dip £4m to £36m, and Coral betting shops returned a static £17m.

Comment, page 25  
Drinking trends, page 4

The shock decision on Binder Hamlyn will prompt a rush for limited liability, writes John Willcock

## Court decision to spark stampede of accountants

The shock decision by the High Court yesterday to award record damages and interest of £105m against Binder Hamlyn will transform the move by accountancy firms from partnership to limited liability into a stampede, industry sources said last night.

Although there have been claims for damages running into the hundreds of millions of pounds against accountancy firms since the UK went into recession in 1989, this is by far the highest award by a court.

Other firms are particularly alarmed by the circumstances of the case against Binder, and the way it could personally bankrupt up to 150 present and past partners. The award for £65m was swollen to £105m by interests and costs, but Binder's professional indemnity only stretched to £71m, creating a £34m shortfall for the partners. Binder is appealing against the decision.

The case revolved around the purchase by ADT, Michael Ashcroft's car auctions and electronic alarms group, of Britannia Securities Group in February 1990.

Binder audited Britannia, and signed off its audit in October 1989 with Britannia's net assets listed as £36.5m. The firm had no further contact with Britannia until 5 January 1990 when it asked a Binder partner to attend a meeting with ADT, which wanted to buy the company.

The High Court case hinged on ADT's claim that Martyn Bishop, audit partner of Binder, assumed responsibility to it at the January 1990 meeting by restating that the 1989 accounts, which his firm had audited, showed a true and fair view of the state of affairs of BSG.

ADT claimed that the accounts did not give a true picture, that this was caused by Binder's negligence and it had suffered loss.

On Binder's information, ADT believed that a premium over the BSG share price of 25

per cent would lead to an agreed takeover.

An ADT director, John Jermaine, told the court that at the crucial meeting Mr Bishop had told him that he had no reason to change his mind over the BSG accounts, which showed a true and fair view of the company's financial position.

Mr Justice May said in his judgment: "I judged Mr Jermaine's oral evidence to be generally quietly impressive and entirely credible. I was less impressed with Mr Bishop's credibility." He said that if Mr Bishop had qualified his statements on BSG, ADT would have taken stock.

"The more serious the qualification, the less likely it would have been that ADT would have proceeded with the bid on the terms then contemplated."

The judge went on: "I have

held that on 5.1.90 Mr Bishop stood by the accounts and thereby assumed responsibility to ADT for the professional competence with which they had been prepared and I have held that ADT relied on what



Ashcroft: Case related to sale of his car auction firm

Mr Bishop said. "Insofar as Binder's admit that they were in certain respects negligent in the auditing and certification of those accounts, it follows that they were in breach of the responsibility which I have held that they assumed."

The decision has alarmed other accountancy firms. Although KPMG has already sought to escape crippling professional indemnity insurance rates by switching from partnership to limited liability status, others are now under severe pressure to follow suit.

The managing partner of one leading accountancy firm said that the ADT award would inevitably spur the move towards incorporation. "I don't think it's a sea change - but it's certainly a high crested wave."

Arthur Andersen itself looks to have escaped any liability for the award. Former Binder partners who wound up at Stoy Hayward and Grant Thornton may not be so lucky. There was considerable confusion on this point last night.

Comment, page 25

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## THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

## Carlton finds winning formula

Carlton Communications was little more than a stock market tipster called Fleet Street Letter when Michael Green arrived in the 1980s. The transformation since then has been remarkable. First Mr Green turned the company into one of the wonder stocks of the subsequent stock market boom and, more impressively, has since created one of the most respected media stocks of the 1990s.

The turning point was winning the London weekday ITV franchise from Thames in 1993, which was quickly followed by the £758m agreed takeover of Central, the Midlands broadcaster. Together these have created the network's leading supplier of programmes just at the time when television advertising is back in demand.

The result was to raise profits before exceptionalists by 39 per cent to £254m in the year to September, before a £7m loss on the sale of two small businesses in the period. Shareholders share in the spoils, with a dividend raised 14 per cent to 23.6p, after a final of 14.3p.

Carlton had some residual dowry effect from the acquisition of Central part-way through 1994, which flattened the latest figures, but underlying profits are still up 30 per cent. The timing of the Central deal looks excellent. Carlton has had the best year for advertising for many years, raising revenues 9 per cent during the past 12 months, against an ITV market up 7 per cent. The company has cashed in on the recovery and has also won market share from its arch-rival London Weekend Television in the capital's ferociously competitive advertising market. The combination of both franchises' advertising arms in Carlton UK Sales, now commanding 32 per cent of ITV advertising revenue, has obviously been a winning formula.

Profits from the core television operation soared from £71.6m to £123m, a momentum that will clearly be difficult to sustain. Some media buyers are looking forward to continued growth in advertising revenues of around 6 or 7 per cent, but City analysts are more cautious, with James Capel expecting something nearer 5 per cent.

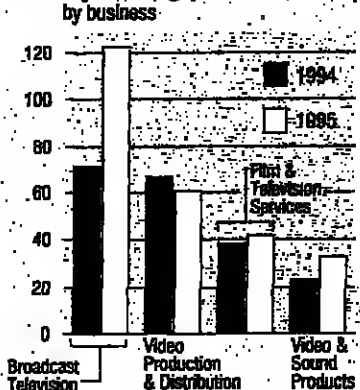
Carlton has a firm base in the UK, making 27 per cent of ITV programmes by value and having already been recommissioned for seven of this year's top 10 drama productions. The idea is to build on that foundation, moving into new areas like cable and satellite at home and new regions, such as recent deals in France and Singapore. So far the picture is mixed. Continued losses at Carlton Home Entertainment and a squeeze on margins hit the videocassette operation, cutting profits by 9 per cent to £60.7m.

## Carlton Communications: at a glance

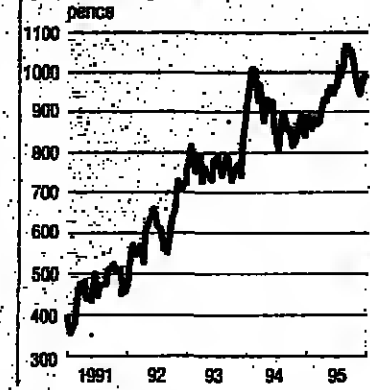
Market value: £2.82bn, share price £10.03

Five-year record	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Turnover (£bn)	0.54	0.64	1.00	1.40	1.58
Pre-tax profits (£m)	88.8	100	126	190	247
Earnings per share (pence)	25.4	38.4	42.0	50.5	60.0
Dividends per share (pence)	15.5	17.0	18.7	20.7	23.6

## Operating profit by business



## Share price



Further growth may be limited by new technologies.

Capel's forecast of £292m group profits this year would put the shares, up 3p at £10.03, on a forward multiple of 14. Reasonable value.

## Costs key to NFC's future

These were appalling figures from NFC, a fact the company admits freely, as new managements are wont to do – it is their last chance to blame someone else. The question facing investors is the extent to which the slump in pre-tax profits in the year to October is a reflection of the previous regime's incompetence or the fundamental unattractiveness of the markets in which NFC operates.

The figures, showing pre-tax profits tumbling from £105.6m to £38.6m, earnings per share a miserable 2p compared to last time's 11.2p and the full-year dividend badly uncovered at 7.1p, are largely irrelevant because, predictably, this was a kitchen sink job, including £35m of exceptional provisions to cover the new chief executive Gerry Murphy's restructuring.

On the face of it he appears to be doing the right things, including a sensible sub-division of the £1bn turnover

Exel Logistics arm into 12 separately accountable operations. There is a realism about his acknowledgement that trading conditions have changed irrevocably from the early years of the 1980s when transport outsourcing was in its infancy and the likes of NFC could charge customers what they wanted.

Now, customers are more sophisticated and the market too heavily supplied for anything but water-thin margins. As operating profits of £88.8m on sales of £2.2bn confirm, returns are unappealing. But not everything can be levelled at the state of the market. Sales are not NFC's problem (they rose 7 per cent in the year), but getting a decent return on them and on assets employed (NFC's chosen measure) is a bigger challenge, given the fixed nature of the contracts that are its stock in trade.

Obligations stretching out three or even five years must be met, even if the terms are unfavourable, which means the only option open to NFC is to cut its cloth to match prevailing conditions. A thousand jobs have gone already since Mr Murphy's restructuring began in the summer but many more have come on board with, for example, the joint venture distribution company with Bass. Keeping the lid on costs in a company employing 37,000 around the world is the key to transforming this old paternalistic behemoth into a lean, commercial enterprise.

Profit forecasts were trimmed

sharply to about £95m, putting the shares on a prospective price/earnings ratio of 14 at the current 139p, down 10p. If this is a genuine recovery stock that is good value, but in a tough market the risks are high. Fairly priced.

## Berisford sees return to profit

The re-shaping of Berisford, the former commodities group, has progressed a fair distance since Alan Bowkett took control in 1992, though it has not been without setbacks.

The old commodities businesses such as British Sugar have long gone. Other peripheral interests such as Euro-trailer, a rentals operation, were disposed of last year for a total of £24m. Still to go are the agribusiness division and some properties that are being smartened up for sale.

Berisford now has two legs: its Magnet kitchens and joinery division, which was bought nearly two years ago, and the American catering equipment business, Welbilt, which was acquired earlier this year.

Given the problems in the housing market and the string of dire announcements that have come from other DIY and building materials companies, the market was braced for bad news yesterday. Berisford shares plunged 15 per cent in June following a Magnet-induced profits warning.

In fact, the outcome was better than feared, pushing the shares up 17p to 190p. Pre-tax profits for the year to September were £26.9m after last year's £3.2m loss. It is Berisford's first full-year profit for five years.

Though operating in tough conditions, Magnet is performing creditably. Its profits increased from £6.2m to £10.2m though there has been some sacrifice in the margin over the second half. Costs have been cut via job losses and a factory closure. But £12m has been invested in a new distribution fleet and refurbished showrooms.

Welbilt turned in £28m in its first period and looks a good deal. Welbilt is hoping to ride on the back of the fast-food expansion world-wide.

With £111m net cash Berisford can easily fund expansion. Targets are likely to be smaller building supplies businesses whose products can be sold through Magnet's 200 outlets. At Welbilt the moves are likely to be into related areas such as a commercial dishwasher manufacturer.

With profits of £37m forecast this year, the shares stand on a forward rating of less than 12. Attractive.

## Simon Pincombe CITY DIARY

## Former Barings chief comes out of the closet

So Andrew Tuckey has not been demoted to a brown cupboard in the basement of the new Barings building. That story now appears to have been put about for the benefit of the Bank of England.

The former deputy chairman of Britain's oldest bank – who resigned “as a matter of honour” after failing to spot a £900m loss – is in fact enjoying a spacious office on the executive floor. This in spite of promises from the Bank of England Governor, Eddie George, that he would need his approval to work again in the City.

“It may look like a large office but he is sharing it with someone,” says a Barings man who appears embarrassed by the presence of the man known as Teflon. Now a consultant to the bank's corporate finance arm Mr Tuckey is still the subject of a Securities and Futures Association investigation.

“You should not be on this floor and you should not be looking in that direction,” says the banker. Sorry.

Forté makes a second strategic blunder in its bid to stay

out of Gerry Robinson's clutches. The recruitment of Czechove to the phalanx of Forté advisers has given the Granada boss another opportunity for espionage. Much like the executive dining rooms at fellow advisers SBC Warburg, the Caz refectories are also supplied by Sutcliffe. Granada's contract catering division.

Mr Robinson might consider the purchase of a waiter's uniform and a silver platter a sensible investment.

The more one thinks about it the more lenient Nick Leeson's sentence looks. Six and a half years in Singapore's Changi jail is a day at the beach compared with the penalties being handed down in the Far East for other forms of financial crime. China, for example, has imposed the death penalty for fiddling the VAT man.

To the Western mind (Customs & Excise excepted) this might appear a little harsh. But the Singapore press notes that VAT fraud is widespread in China, with 943 cases reported last year at a cost of 24.78bn yuan (a lot of wonga). The death

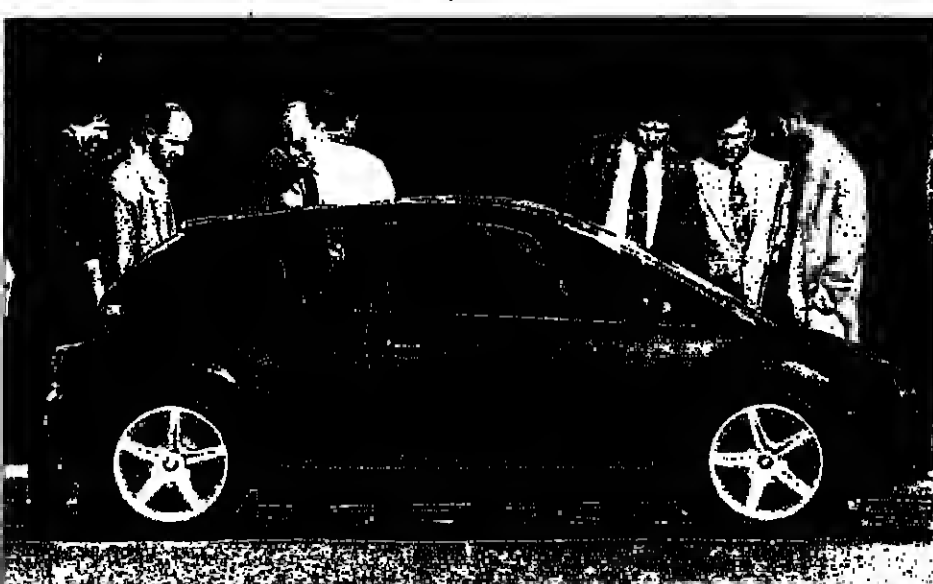
penalty takes effect from next April and applies to those “making and selling fake VAT invoices”. Any tax officials implicated in VAT fraud will also be executed.

But that is not an end to the matter. The authorities have also cut VAT export rebates, claiming that it would take China two years to pay the 55bn yuan it owes exporters in unpaid rebates.

“I want to say I am sorry,” said Xiang Huaicheng, deputy director of the national taxation administration. “The Ministry of Finance does not have the money.”

Michael Green, the cigar-chomping chairman of Carlton Communications, is suitably underwhelmed by the news that the Independent Television Commission is to give a total of £800,000 back to the 16 ITV companies in the form of licence fee rebates. “It will pay for my children's school fees,” sniffs the media mogul, “but it's not going to double the share price.”

One wonders which lofty establishment Mr Green's children go to.



And finally – news reaches us from BMW, which is trying to convince the City that its four-year-old electric car (above) is the vehicle to be seen in. Created by the propeller heads at BMW Technik, the maker's design centre,

the E1 made its debut at the 1991 Frankfurt Motor Show. But with another hike in petrol duty you never know your luck. So proud are the Germans that they are wheeling it out again to mark BMW Technik's 10th birthday.

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## Stripping off Clarke's bikini

Statistics are like bikinis, Kenneth Clarke told the Tory Party conference, as he teased them with hints about a tax-cutting Budget: more interesting for what they conceal than what they reveal. Could he have had his own Budget in mind? The vital statistics that made the headlines were not all that they seemed.

Despite the big increase in the forecast for public borrowing next year, the Chancellor succeeded in portraying his Budget as cautious by claiming he had found the money for his £3bn tax giveaway by matching spending cuts. On both counts Mr Clarke is open to challenge.

Labour's jibe of 7p up, 1p down was too charitable. Compared with the position this year, Mr Clarke hardly cut taxes at all. For one thing, the rise in road fuel and tobacco duties will bring in an extra £1.3bn. This is not altered by the fact that they were pre-announced, in the form of an intention to raise them in real terms by 5 and 3 per cent a year respectively in the 1993 Budget.

Then there is the increase in the council tax which is implied by the Government's own projections. Tony Travers, an expert in local government at the LSE, expects rises of 8-9 per cent. This is what the Treasury itself seems to be projecting, with council tax revenues set to rise by £700m to £9.9bn next year.

Taking these two sources of revenue into account, Mr Clarke's giveaway of £3bn is reduced to a billion. But it isn't only his claim to have cut taxes that does not stand up to scrutiny. For the Chancellor didn't hold the line on expenditure to anything like the extent he suggested.

On the surface, the clamp-

ECONOMIC VIEW  
PAUL WALLACE

down on spending looks as impressive as the rhetoric. Against a background in which real public spending has risen at an annual rate of almost 2 per cent in the past 15 years, the Treasury's objective for the next financial year certainly appears tough. The control total – which excludes debt interest and cyclically varying social security payments – is set to fall by almost 1 per cent.

But delve more deeply into the details and doubts creep in. Included in the control total of £260bn next year is a cut in the housing budget of about half a billion pounds, which comes from the first tranche in the sell-off in the Housing Corporation's loan portfolio. The Department of Transport's budget also gains by about a billion pounds from the sale of the rolling stock companies, after a boost of £800m this year.

These are privatisations that

Change in real planned spending



do not speak their names, and in common with most other privatisation proceeds, should be treated as extra revenue rather than as spending offsets.

The much-vaunted successor to privatisation is the Private Finance Initiative, under which public works are privately financed. Spending under the PFI will jump from £600m this year to £1.9bn next year.

The cost to the taxpayer is postponed until the services derived from PFI contracts become available, but the bill will eventually be presented.

Then there is the lottery to consider. So far the effect of the Government's sparkling new stream of revenue – this time a tax that does not speak its name – has been simply to flatter the PSBR. Next year, however, the distribution fund begins to shell out money in earnest. Lottery-financed expenditure is poised to rise from £300m this year to £1.4bn in 1996/7.

Last June, the Chancellor redefined the Government's overall expenditure target to exclude spending financed by the lottery. But the Treasury does take account of it in its presentation of public capital spending, which in its absence would fall in real terms by 13 per cent next year rather than the 8 per cent decline shown in the Red Book. As we saw in the clash between William Waldegrave and Virginia Bottomley before the Budget, the Chief Secretary, for one, sees the

availability of lottery finance as a reason for cutting departmental spending.

What happens when we include these elements in the public spending totals? The control total, when adjusted to take account of the privatisation proceeds from the housing corporation loan book and the rolling stock companies, together with planned PFI spending, is flat in real terms rather than the 1 per cent official decline. When adjusted similarly, overall expenditure, which also includes lottery-financed spending, rises by almost half a per cent rather than falling by the same amount.

Remember, this is the plan. In the past two years, an inflation under-run has turned planned austerity into a more lenient regime by allowing planned cash totals to purchase more in the way of goods and services. There is a good chance that this could occur again in 1996/7.

More important, the curbs on public spending bear the hallmarks of a temporary rather than a permanent change. There is a pay policy – again one that does not speak its name – in the form of a freeze on the public sector pay bill. All pay policies have eventually collapsed, and it is unclear why this one should defy that rule. There are further attempts to root out waste, and crude measures such as the imposition of the 12 per cent real cut in running costs over the next three years.

So did Mr Clarke have his Budget in mind when he raised the subject of bikinis? As he said, when teasing the party faithful about tax cuts: you might say that, I couldn't possibly comment.

## COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Arrol-Northrop (F)	306m (200m)	16.2m (8.2m)	40.3p (13.6p)	17.7p (16.5p)
Baxi (F)	4.54bn (4.45bn)	590m (552m)	43.4p (40.1p)	22.7p (21.1p)
Berisford (F)	402m (168m)	26.9m (3.2m)	15.7p (2.1p)	3p (0.5p)
Black (F)	56.8m (51.2m)	14.2m (12.2m)	34.2p (29.7p)	13p (11.5p)
BTP (F)	189m (161m)	21.0m (18.1m)	9.07p (8.03p)	3.85p (3.62p)
Carlton Comm (F)	1.58bn (1.40bn)	247m (160m)	55.3p (53.3p)	23.5p (20.6p)
Callison Group (F)	17.1m (14.2m)	-8.4m (4.6m)	-3.5p (11p)	n/a (n/a)
Dunlop Group (F)	25.8m (21.3m)	4.78m (4.13m)	9.6p (8.2p)	3.45p (1.4p)
Essex Int (F)	37.3m (36.3m)	6.0m (6.7m)	7.5p (10.0p)	2.5p (2p)
NFC (F)	2.20bn (2.08bn)	38.8m (108m)	2.0p (11.2p)	7.1p (7.1p)
Richard Worsam (F)	58.5m (49.4m)	3.82m (2.55m)	3.79p (3.24p)	1p (0.9p)
Wellbitt (F)	56.8m (58.0m)	4.09m (1.88m)	2.3p (2.7p)	0.45p (0.4p)

(F) - Final (I) - Interim (Q) - Quarterly

## IN BRIEF

## Margin pressure eases for BTP

BTP has seen falls of up to 30 per cent in raw material costs since September and October, easing the recent pressure on margins. The chemicals group had suffered price increases of as much as 80 per cent earlier in the year. BTP shrugged aside the problems in the first half, lifting pre-tax profits 16 per cent to £21m in the six months to September. The dividend goes up 4.6 per cent to 3.85p.

## Chamberlain Phipps profits slump

Chamberlain Phipps has seen pre-tax profits slump from £4.46m to £2.81m in the six months to September, but is holding the interim dividend at 2.7p. Europe's leading supplier of footwear and footwear materials said the results were disappointing, but trading had improved since October. The backlog of spring 1996 orders was now comparable to the initial levels of last spring.



## market report/shares

## TAKING STOCK

## Christies in takeover frame as investor builds stake

## MARKET REPORT

## DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year



hold the 5,200 level, touched in early trading, ensured a late rally petered out.

Government stocks offered a little inspiration, despite a poor reception to the auction. They scored gains of over 11, encouraged by US Treasuries.

The Footsie upheaval was announced after the market closed. Anticipating its departure, Inchcape slumped 19p to 217p, but Midlands Electricity, helped along by its proposed special dividend and share split, took its removal calmly, gaining 18p to 983p.

British Petroleum followed the Government's share sale with a 7p gain to 524p with Smith Barney, the US invest-

ment house, and NatWest Securities backing the shares. NatWest was also keen on Shell, up 5.5p to 820.5p.

BT continued to decline, worried by the proposed Ofcom price cuts and increasing competition. The shares fell 6p to 352p, lowest for three years.

Bass jumped 26p to 695p following its results. Led by the success of the restructured Bass bid to materialise, gained 2.5p to 160p. Rank Organisation's encouraging trading statement lifted the shares 16p to 425p.

Berisford gained 17p to 190p following its profits recovery, but NCF lost 10p to 139p after its profit collapse.

Vymara, the wallcovering group, slumped 35p to 104p on a profits warning.

Williams Holdings gained 7p to 321p with SBC Warburg moving from hold to buy.

Standard Chartered fell 16p to 588p (after 580.5p) as stories, subsequently denied, circulated that it planned to close its money market and derivatives operations.

Megalomedia, the new Saatchi vehicle, continued its steady progress, gaining a further 11p at 94p. The shares were listed on AIM on Tuesday at 33p.

Another AIM newcomer had a spectacular start. Flomark, a software group, was placed at 130p and closed at 205p. Profits of around £400,000 are forecast for this year against £400,700. Pet City, with 35 superstores selling pet requirements, is due to make its AIM debut today and some suggest another heady perfor-

mance. The shares were placed at 300p and an opening price of more than 350p is expected.

T&N was actively traded ahead of an expected US judgment over asbestos claims. The shares slumped to 120p.

Cliff Resources, involved in bid talks, had another eventful session, jumping 14p to 92p with stories going the rounds a deal had been agreed. The shares have become a speculators' delight.

Recently they fell back sharply as rumours the talks had been abandoned went the rounds.

Newcomer Wilmington, once part of the Maxwell empire, made an impressive start, closing at 61p against the 50p issue price.

Prion, the hand-held computer group, continued to suffer from the loss of NatWest Securities as one of its two market-makers. The shares tumbled 70p to 765p.

Pan Andean, a tidder seeking oil and gas in Bolivia, is said to have lined up an impressive partner for its gas development. One name in the frame is the US oil group Murphy. The AIM-traded company has already linked with BHP, the Australian giant, for its other Bolivian venture, the Chapare block. A progress report, likely to be encouraging, is expected shortly on Chapare. The shares are 17.25p. They have touched 18.5p and been as low as 12.75p.

Robert H Lowe, a packaging, printing and sportswear group rescued by David Seibre, is acquiring Majoca, a corrugated paper business, for £2.2m in shares and a further payment of up to £2m. It is Lowe's first significant deal since it was restructured last year. The shares rose 2p to 17p.

## DATA BANK

FTSE 100 3,562.8 -1.4  
FTSE 250 3,959.8 -0.4  
FTSE 350 1,814.3 -1.5  
SEAO VOLUME 704.6m shares  
28,401 bargains  
Gilt Index 96.22 -0.53

## SHARE SPOTLIGHT

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## SHARE PRICE DATA

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: ex rights a dividend; ex-all a dividend; ex-all a dividend; ex-all a dividend.

Source: Financial Times

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## MARKET LEADERS: TOP 20 VOLUMES

Shares traded in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Source: Financial Times

## FTSE 100 INDEX HOUR BY HOUR

Open 3569.7 up 5.5 11.00 3568.3 down 15.9 15.00 3565.9 down 11.3  
09.00 3563.1 down 1.1 12.00 3560.4 down 13.8 18.00 3557.5 down 0.6  
10.00 3553.4 down 10.8 13.00 3550.3 down 13.9 Close 3562.8 down 1.4

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Source: Financial Times

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Source: Financial Times



## sport

# Samoa travel far for due respect

As the rugby union authorities in England and Scotland are more used to brickbats than bouquets, they may be pleased to know that in one faraway corner of the rugby world they are held up as paragons of far-sighted virtue.

Ever since they were cast adrift by the big unions of the southern hemisphere at the end of the World Cup, the Western Samoans have been engaged in a battle for their island's very survival as an international-playing country. Remember, only six months ago Samoa were World Cup quarter-finalists for the second time, which is more than could be said, for example, of Wales. As it happens – and no thanks to the New Zealand and Australian Rugby Unions – they are winning the battle, and in propaganda terms they could scarcely have had a greater opportunity than the tour of Scotland and England, which will conclude with the Twickenham Test, a 78,000 sell-out, on Saturday week.

It is both poignant and pointed that the Western Samoa team have had to come half-way round the world to state their case, and a charitable view would be that a combination of the distance and the unfriendly weather has had its effect on an indifferent playing record including defeats by Cambridge University, the Midlands and North but lightened by the superb achievement in drawing with the Scots.

**Steve Bale on the island determined to remain part of international rugby union despite being cast adrift by its neighbours**

or fall on their own considerable merits. "All I can do is express the gratitude we feel that we have been given this opportunity and that we are being accorded the full status of a worthy international opponent," Bryan Williams, coach and habitual front man, said.

"We would like other unions to give us the same respect but closer to home it's been a very slow process. I have taken my concerns to the New Zealand Rugby Union but I have to say their attitude is pretty patronising, even towards me. The All

**'I have taken my concerns to the NZRU but their attitude is pretty patronising'**

Blacks have never been to Samoa and neither have Australia, yet both Wales and Scotland have, and the very fact that we are here in England tends to reinforce the contrast in the way we are treated."

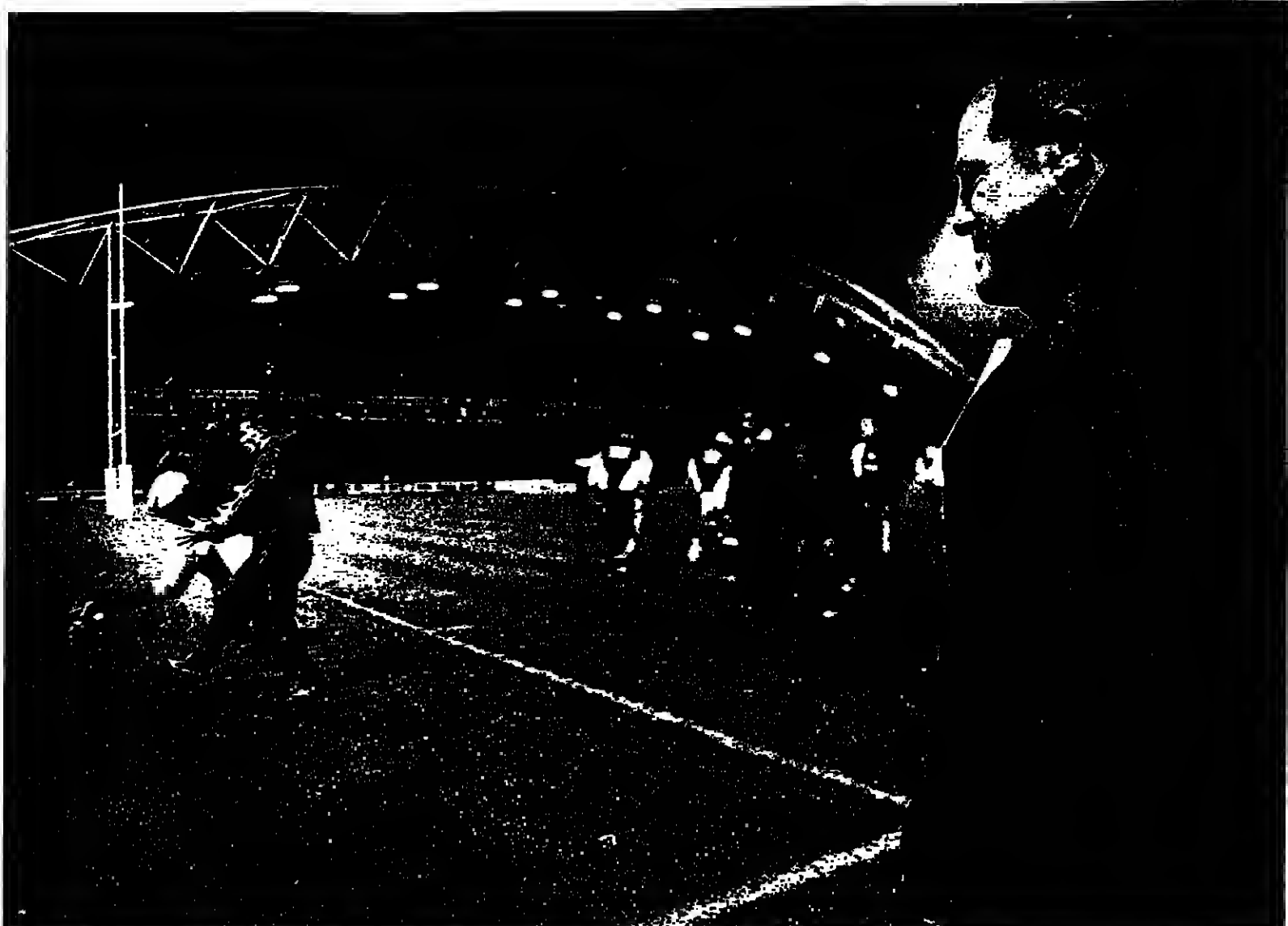
As Williams is one of the all-time great All Blacks, a phenomenally gifted wing of Samoan descent who illuminated the Seventies, the un-neighbourly negativity has been hard to take. And when the South African, Australian

and New Zealand unions got into bed with Rupert Murdoch with their £360m television deal announced on the eve of the World Cup final in June his very worst fears were realised.

Williams had warned that to exclude Samoa from the Sanza competition would be a death sentence to the national team, since the leading players would either sell themselves to rugby league or else play rugby union not only in Australia or New Zealand but for Australia or New Zealand. After the World Cup six of the squad who had been in South Africa went to league and one to Japan.

The effect was felt not simply on Williams's squad but on the country itself, since according to the coach's often-repeated aphorism, "rugby to the Samoans is as bread is to butter, as shoes are to feet." Samoans are also profoundly religious people – the touring party holds prayer meetings most evenings and immediately before and after every match – and, without being flippanant, you could say their prayers are being answered.

As the only defence then available, Williams tried to sign the Samoans up to the rival rugby circus proposed by Murdoch's broadcasting antagonist, Kerry Packer, and it was only after that pie-in-the-sky had crumbled that the Samoans at last had a piece of good fortune when he bumped into Michael Fay, the merchant banker and yachting buff whose money had



Bryan Williams, the Western Samoa coach, is thankful for the encouragement received from the home unions

Photograph: Peter Jay

been behind New Zealand's America's Cup challenges.

"The Packer thing seemed to give us a lifeline when we were desperate and when it fell over some of the players decided they weren't going to wait around any longer. But then I happened to meet Michael at a function and when he said he enjoyed the rugby our team had

played I told him the problems we had.

"He invited me to see him, we had some discussions and things graduated from there so that we now have a package in place that secures the financial position of our players. It's only a beginning but I'm sure people would agree we deserved a bit of luck."

The next problem to solve is

regular international competition and Williams is immersed in establishing an annual Pan-Pacific competition involving the other island countries together with Argentina, America, Canada and Japan. More urgently, he had to put together a radically changed squad to make this tour in Scotland and England.

For a while there was concern that, whether through lack of finance or of adequate manpower, the Samoans might not make the trip. "There was a point when I was at my wits' end, but once we announced the Fay deal and there was the prospect of this Pan-Pacific tournament the players felt there was a future for Manu Samoa," Williams said.

"The difficulty is that when you lose players as we have you lose vital experience, the proven ability of players to perform in front of big crowds, to be away from home and play in foreign conditions." Saturday will bring them to Gloucester, and for a Samoan there could not be anything much more foreign than that.

## Hart finally appointed New Zealand coach

John Hart, one of the coaches who had-mouthed England during the 1991 World Cup, belatedly realised a lifetime's ambition yesterday when he was appointed New Zealand coach at the fourth time of applying, writes Steve Bale.

As it was also his 50th birthday, the former Auckland coach had a double cause for celebration, the main one being that this is a professional appointment which, according to reports which the new appointee

has denied, is worth up to a performance-related £86,000 a year.

"Rest assured it is not the figure that is being touted in the press," Hart said, although he declined to reveal the exact amount. "I guess I'm an adage that if you try, try again, you might finally get there."

His first task as successor to Laurie Mains, whom he has sometimes bitterly opposed, is to prepare the All Blacks for the most arduous year in their

history, including two Tests each against Australia and Scotland, one against Western Samoa and an extraordinary five against South Africa.

"If ever there was a reason not to stand, it was when I saw the itinerary. I guess that's part of the challenge," he said. Among the other contenders was Maurice Trapp, the Englishman who succeeded Hart as Auckland coach in 1987 when the provincial side – for whom Hart played 26 times at

scrum-half in the late Sixties and early Seventies – were in the middle of the greatest period in their history.

Hart previously lost votes to become All Black coach to Alex Wyllie in 1988 and Mains in 1992 and a year ago, though he was a national selector from 1987-91 and was imposed on Wyllie as co-coach during the 1991 World Cup, when the relationship between the two was never better than extremely tense.

## New format agreed for European Cup

CLEM THOMAS

The format for next season's European Cup, which has been worrying the Rugby Football Union before they give approval for English clubs to take part, has been settled, according to reports in France.

There will be 20 teams – four each from France, England and Wales, three each from Ireland and Scotland, and one from Italy. The 20th place will be decided by a play-off between the second Italian team and the top Romanian side. This is because of the extremely poor showing of Farul Constanta in this year's competition, and is an attempt to ensure that only strong teams qualify.

There are to be four pools of five teams, and each team will play two home and two away matches. The top team in each pool will progress to the semi-finals. The matches are all to be played by the end of November, to clear the path for the Five Nations' Championship later in the season.

## North are backed into corner

The North have made six changes to the side which beat Western Samoa for the Divisional Championship decider against the Midlands at Nottingham on Saturday.

The withdrawal of the full-back Tim Simpson, wing Jim Naylor and centre Will Greenwood for the England A game against Western Samoa has forced a reshuffle in the backs. Jim Mallinder moves from the wing to replace Simpson, with Sale's Chris Yates stepping in to make his debut and Austin Healey moving to the other wing from scrum-half.

Sale's Jos Baxendell makes his first senior appearance in place of Greenwood, while David Scully returns to scrum-half. The only forward change is at hooker, with Gary French coming in place of Tim Herbert, who is relegated to the bench.

Swansea became the first club to secure a European Cup semi-final place when they narrowly defeated the French club Castres 22-10 at St Helen's on Tuesday. The Welsh club, needing a six-point margin to win the pool, accumulated a 19-7 lead at the interval. Three Alled Williams penalties were fol-

lowed by a try from Alan Harris before Jean-Marc Aue scored a fine try for Castres that Cyril Savy converted – only for Garin Jenkins to score Swansea's second try.

Swansea increased their lead to 22-7 with a fourth Williams penalty and then the replacement lock Guy Jeannard was sent off after being on the field for just two minutes.

However, this only served to motivate the French side and, after Savy kicked a penalty to cut the deficit to 12 points, it needed just a converted try to win the group with seven minutes remaining. Castres crossed the Swansea line but were called back and the home side just survived in a frantic finish.

Natal, the provincial champions, and three other South African sides will take part in the Rugby Super 12 tournament beginning on 1 March. Along with Natal, the provincial sides Transvaal, Northern Transvaal and Western Province will represent South Africa against five teams from New Zealand and three from Australia.

The tournament replaces the Super 10 series and is part of a £550m (£360m) television package involving the unions of

South Africa, Australia and New Zealand with Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

The 12 teams will play each other once in a round-robin format, with the top four sides then advancing to semi-final matches. The championship will be played in the last weekend in May.

The five New Zealand sides, chosen on the basis of regional representation, will be Canterbury, Otago, Wellington, Auckland and Waikato. Australia's sides, chosen as the three best provinces, will be New South Wales, Queensland and Australian Capital Territory.

The agreement, signed in June with Murdoch, gives News Corporation exclusive rights to broadcast all representative rugby union, including four matches, involving the three nations until the year 2005. It was considered the final blow to amateurism in the game, which was under threat of losing its top players to rugby league.

Two months after the announcement of the agreement, the International Rugby Board loosened its restrictions on compensation for rugby union players.

North team v Midlands, Sporting Digest, page 31

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SEE TOMORROW'S PAPER FOR TOKEN 6 AND THE ORDER FORM

## Women's tour welcomes new events

GOLF

The European women's tour yesterday announced four new tournaments for next season – but also the loss of one of its longest-running events.

The Ford Classic has been part of the circuit since 1962 and this year at Chart Hills in Kent had prize-money of £110,000. However, it has disappeared

from the calendar because of the loss of the motor company's sponsorship – which has happened despite Europe boasting the top three players in the world rankings in Laura Davies and the Swedes Annika Sorenstam and Liselotte Neumann.

The four new events are the Desse Swiss Open in June, the McDonald's WPGA championship in August at a Scottish venue yet to be named, the

Compaq Open three weeks later in Sweden and the Three Nations Cup in October in Belgium. The McDonald's event will be the first tour event played solely for charity, with all proceeds going to the Ronald McDonald Children's Charities.

Highlights of the season include the £500,000 Westbix Women's British Open at Woburn on 15-18 August and the Solheim Cup match against

the Americans at St Pierre, Chesham, on 20-22 September.

The circuit, which will visit 15 different countries, will also kick off at St Pierre with the Welsh Open on May 2 to 5. All three days of the Solheim Cup will be televised live on both sides of the Atlantic by Sky Sports and the American channel NBC.

Tour schedule, Sporting Digest, page 31

## Authoritative voices against boxing

From Mr H C Grant

Sir: Mr Willis (letters, 30 Nov) demonstrates quite extraordinary arrogance when he states categorically that anyone who opposes his views on boxing "knows nothing of boxing or boxing people". As a neurologist for 40 years, I have had something to do with the brains of boxers and, through radio and television appearances, have met professional boxers, some of whom share my opinion that boxing should be outlawed.

Tony van den Bergh, who is also campaigning to prevent healthy young men from scrambling their brains for the purpose of entertaining fans – 99 per cent of whom would never dream of climbing into the ring, used to be an amateur boxer. He was also for more than a decade an Inspector for the British Boxing Board of Control and subsequently a boxing commentator both for the BBC and for ITV. I suggest that his knowledge of this industry may be on a level with that of a director of the National Sporting Club.

Nobody – including oppo-

nents of boxing – questions the undoubted valour of boxers nor the dedication demanded of this dangerous discipline. As for the character-building claims – self-discipline and self-control – Mr Willis might reflect that the Kray and the Richardson were all skillful boxers.

Finally, to compare the dangers of boxing with "coal-mining and the desecration of power stations" is to overlook its one unique requirement which is that, unlike any other "sport", its object is to cause brain damage. Yours faithfully, H C GRANT London NW3 4XR

## Not seeing the wood for the trees

From Mr R E Massie

Sir: I have just watched Nottingham Forest manage to qualify for the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup. Good for Forest, but I fail to understand the eulogising of Messrs Hansen and Hill. Forest were their own worst enemies; if they had the slightest idea of how to retain possession and play the ball into the

opposition's danger area, Lyon would have been frustrated and dispirited long before the end.

As long as TV pundits tell us that this sort of performance is good, English football will continue its downward spiral. Yours, RALPH E MASSIE Colchester, Essex 5 December

## Cloth cap or dishes?

From Mr A Forbes

Sir: With future Premier league TV deals being so vast that they will be funded by pay per view television, the *Independent* is right to comment that most people will either not want or not be able to afford to watch football on TV.

One could wildly predict us going back to the future; a time when people supported and even watched their local club, and hung on every word newspaper match reporters relayed back for Sunday's first edition.

Progress? Will anyone sell me their cloth cap? Yours faithfully, ANDREW FORBES Aberdeen AB2 1PF

## Captain Christy

From Mr P Hughes

Sir: To defend the Ryder Cup successfully in 1997 it is imperative the right man is selected to succeed Bernard Gallacher as captain. He needs to be strong and resolute with current knowledge of what is going on in the world of golf.

Besides these attributes, he must be a winner in his own right and at the same time retain the gift of being a diplomat and a gentleman.

We have such a person in Christy O'Connor Jr. His selection as captain would immediately put the Americans on the defensive.

Yours hopefully, PETER HUGHES Sheppshed, Leics LE12 9BH 28 November

Letters should be marked "For publication" and should contain daytime and evening phone numbers. They should be sent to Sports Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL. They may be shortened for reasons of space.



# Stakes high in the high street betting contest

While Bass announced increased profits yesterday, many in racing were wondering what would be happening to their own funds. The brewers, owners of Coral, were widely reported this week to be considering making a take-over bid for Ladbrokes to create a bookmaking supergiant.

Any merger of the two betting organisations would mean a single company in control of almost a third of the nation's shops. It would also lead to a new era of consolidation among those on racing's shop floor.

Bass has refused to comment on the rumours, and there were some indications yesterday that the City speculation has been wide of the mark. But if a takeover were to go ahead the 1,000 outlets of Ladbrokes and 930 of Coral would combine, and then, immediately, some of them would drop away. There would be no room for two shops of the same line in the high streets, and where the two firms clash, unmissable would have soon been requested for return.

Even of a general level, the reduction of competition appears no great boon to the reg-

## Richard Edmondson on how merger talk is worrying a punters' organisation

ular backer and, specifically, the National Association for the Protection of Punters believes there are boiling waters ahead. "We've been worried for a while about the dominance of the Big Three in the market, and if that was in effect the Big One, as this new entity would be so much bigger than Hills, that would be very serious," Steve High, NAPP's chairman, said yesterday.

"The bookmakers already control the on-course market as much as they can to minimise liabilities, and it could be that soon they would effectively choose their own starting price."

NAPP's committee meeting next week will also discuss what effect any takeover would have on Satellite Information Ser-

vices (SIS), in which bookmaker pressure is already viewed with some suspicion. A pooling of the Coral and Ladbrokes stake in SIS would create a single, strong sphere of influence.

Recent movements have also confirmed a NAPP suggestion that the act of betting would soon be witnessed in a different location. "We have been speculating how long it would be before betting terminals were allowed in pubs and clubs," High said. "And with Bass's connections in that area it is bound to be sooner rather than later."

"That would require quite a switch but if that legislation comes in, as we believe it will, it would put Bass in an almost unassailable position. In general, this wouldn't be healthy for competition at all. It will be a restriction of choice and only those bets that Coral feel are appropriate would be offered."

In general, it would also be bad for racing's coffers. While a closure of certain shops should mean punters relocating

themselves in the nearest alternative, it may not be as simple as that.

The advent of Camelot has shown that horse players need only the slightest excuse to have their attention switched to a load of jiggling balls. The removal of a favourite corner in a favourite shop could also mean the removal of punters from the sport. Those who monitor turnover and levy would soon let us know of such an eventuality.

If there is a winner in all this (outside the boardroom and heavy share investors) it may be among the embittered ranks of the Drift ranks of the shop owner who has seen the lottery take over from the Big Three as the *bite noie*. Fewer players may mean better results.

"If they reduce the number of shops I think that might have a positive spin-off for the smaller bookmakers," Mark Dean, the owner of Derby's The Small Bookmaker (which is smaller than he would like), said yesterday. "We would hope to attract some of that custom. We need it."

Bass profits, page 25



Takeover targets: Betting shops are becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of the major bookmaking chains. Photograph: Brian Hams

## Pipe seeks six-timer

Minnehoma, the 1994 Grand National winner, is one of five Martin Pipe entries for the Welsh National at Chepstow on 27 December. Pipe, attempting to win the race for the sixth time in eight years, has also entered Riverside Boy, Cache Fleur, Chatam and Terao.

Earth Summit, 20 lengths behind Master Oats last year when the race was switched from Chepstow to Newbury on New Year's Eve, is 5-1 favourite with the sports, Coral.

Nigel Twiston-Davies's chaser received 8th from Master

## Tracks hope to beat frost

Oats last year but the difference between the pair would be 25th this time.

Master Oats is 7-1 joint second-favourite in Coral's list but is not a definite runner. At the same odds is Superior Finish, trained by Jenny Pittman, who could also run Willsford. The latter's participation depends on the ground conditions not being too soft.

WELSH NATIONAL (Chepstow, 3m 5f 10yd) Dec 27: 1. Earth Summit, 2. Master Oats, 3. Superior Finish, 4. Riverside Boy, 5. Cache Fleur, 6. Chatam, 7. Terao, 8. Willsford, 9. Willsford, 10. Willsford, 11. Willsford, 12. Willsford, 13. Willsford, 14. Willsford, 15. Willsford, 16. Willsford, 17. Willsford, 18. Willsford, 19. Willsford, 20. Willsford, 21. Willsford, 22. Willsford, 23. Willsford, 24. Willsford, 25. Willsford, 26. Willsford, 27. Willsford, 28. Willsford, 29. Willsford, 30. Willsford, 31. Willsford, 32. Willsford, 33. Willsford, 34. Willsford, 35. Willsford, 36. Willsford, 37. Willsford, 38. Willsford, 39. Willsford, 40. Willsford, 41. Willsford, 42. Willsford, 43. Willsford, 44. Willsford, 45. Willsford, 46. Willsford, 47. Willsford, 48. Willsford, 49. Willsford, 50. Willsford, 51. Willsford, 52. Willsford, 53. Willsford, 54. Willsford, 55. Willsford, 56. Willsford, 57. Willsford, 58. Willsford, 59. Willsford, 60. Willsford, 61. Willsford, 62. Willsford, 63. Willsford, 64. 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## sport

# There is something quite honourable and moving in the spectacle of two opponents retiring with honours even

It wasn't easy to notice it amid all the noisy and well-deserved tributes to Mike Atherton's great innings in Johannesburg on Monday, but those nail-biting fifth-day heroics also represented a triumph for an even more reticent creature: the draw. Cricket, once the subject of endless mockery for its frequent failure to deliver clear-cut results, has in recent times absorbed the win-lose culture that dominates modern sport.

Television, dominated by impatient Americans and Australians, is devoted to the stark contrast between victors and vanquished: it prefers a penalty shoot-out to a handshake - it likes to cut between laughter and tears. And one-day cricket, which insists on a winner

even if it has to resort to some crazy arithmetic to find one, seems to have entered the bloodstream of the modern player. But what Atherton's innings proved was that a draw can be the best - the most dramatic and resonant - result of all. He himself said as much in a post-match soundbite.

It is, on the face of it, ironic. According to the normal criteria for sporting thrills, Monday in Johannesburg was a day of unremitting tedium. Nothing about it could have been captured by a programme of highlights, because there weren't any. England scored a measly 186 runs (two per over); only one wicket fell. Maiden followed maiden in a dumb procession. For the casual spectator,

counting down the overs must have seemed about as exciting as a chug-past of empty freight cars. But for fans it was a day of slow-burning drama. Every over represented a steady blunting of South Africa's hopes and nerves. As England prodded their way to safety, you could see shoulders sag in the outfield; when Brian McMillan started mouthing curses at Jack Russell as he scurried about the crease like, well, a Jack Russell, it was hard to stifle a cheer.

It was only a draw, but as many armchair fans in chilly England were quick to say, in its way it was better than a win. We shouldn't be surprised by this. Some of the greatest games in recent memory have been draws. One thinks of



ROBERT WINDER

Graham Gooch's grand match at Lord's when he scored 333 against India. Mohammad Azharuddin replied with a dashing century of his own and Kapil Dev took four consecutive wickets to save the follow-on. Then, of course, there is the cele-

brated tied Test, which exists now as a piece of grainy footage showing West Indians sprinting about like pinballs to secure a match-saving run-out on the final ball. One thinks of Cowdrey hobbling out for the last over with a broken arm, or of Gavaskar astounding history by scoring 221 to bring India to within an inch of an improbable last-innings target of 458. What could be more winning than this?

There are many other examples. Yet the draw continues to strike many people as a soft option, an infuriatingly inconclusive waste of time. Americans famously dislike football because of its enthusiasm for low-scoring draws, which must indeed seem pointless to a mentality that assumes the only

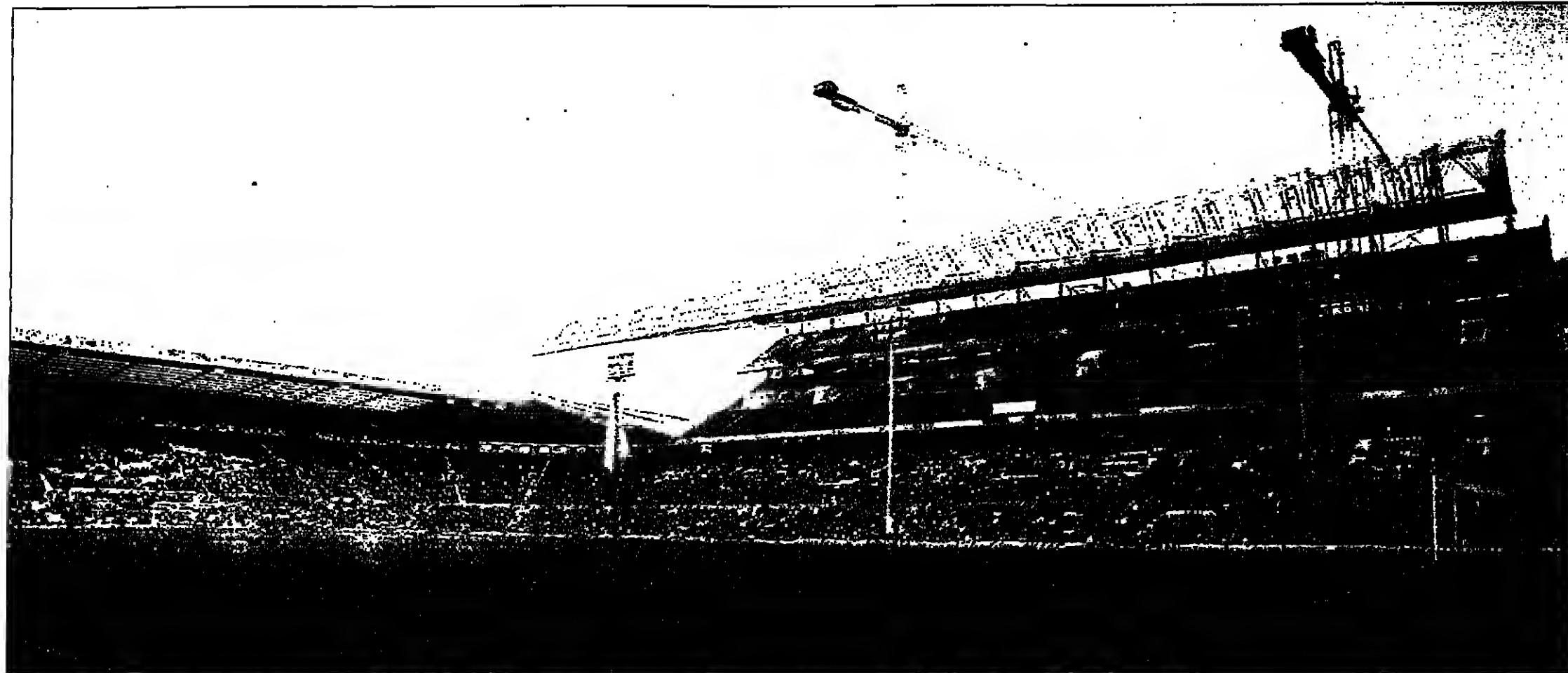
reason to play sport is to win. But the point is not to win - it is to try to win. There is something quite honourable and moving in the spectacle of two opponents retiring with honours even, having withstood the best the other had to offer, and with a tacit agreement to have another crack next week.

Draws of this sort are peculiar to cricket (and chess), where individual games are part of a larger match. There is a sense of mutual respect, which in the case of cricket, with its five-day tussles, seems well-earned. The mere possibility of a draw gives the game a third dimension, something richer than the monochrome finality of winning and losing. Close draws keep the tension going right down

to the wire by keeping alive both teams' hopes of a win; even not-so-close ones, like this week's, give the losing team something to fight for. So it is a shame that the draw has become something of an endangered species. In recent years it has become a rare beast. The bald figures are startling: in the 70 Tests before this tour England drew just 19. In the 70 before that England drew 46.

Atherton's "finest hour" stand in Johannesburg reminds us that a stand-off can be every bit as satisfying as a victory, but also (witness the shell-shocked look on Hansie Crooke's face afterwards) just as mortifying as a thrashing. It was, as they say, right out of the top draw.

Ken Jones is on holiday



Dreaming spires: Despite the construction having only begun in June, Manchester United's new North Stand - the biggest in Britain - should be completed by April

Photograph: Action Images

## Forest in dire need of new recruits

Glenn Moore on the hard task ahead for Britain's last hope of European honours

As Frank Clark wearily pulled his bags from the carousel at East Midlands airport in the early hours of yesterday morning he was asked if he would be able to strengthen his squad before the Uefa Cup resumes in March. "I do not know, you will have to ask the chairman," the Nottingham Forest manager replied.

Clark is likely to do just that himself, but he knows he is unlikely to get a positive answer, at least not to the extent required to make a difference. It may seem churlish to talk of strengthening Forest so soon after they earned a 1-0 aggregate win over Olympique Lyonnais, but Clark is aware there are tougher challenges ahead.

Already into tomorrow's draw for the quarter-finals are Barcelona, Bayern Munich and PSV Eindhoven, Milan, who play tonight, are expected to join them. Daunting opponents, especially as Colin Cooper, so steadfast at the heart of Forest's defence during Tuesday's goalless draw in Lyon, will be suspended for the first leg.

Cooper picked up his second yellow card of the competition for kicking the ball away and, though he said he hoped the club might appeal after looking at the video, he admitted a reprieve was unlikely. "It is going to be very hard to watch having worked so hard to get here," Cooper said. "If we get a big one I do not know whether I would rather we were at home first, so I could play in the Nou Camp for example, or away, because there would be a great atmosphere for a second leg at the City Ground."

With Carl Tiler now at Aston Villa, Alf Inge-Haaland is Cooper's likely replacement as their thin squad is stretched yet further. Any new players would have to be signed by 15 January to be eligible for the rest of the competition but there is little money available.

Although Clark has brought in almost £10m with the sales of Stan Collymore, Tiler and Lars Bohinen, more than half has gone in various deductions and on Kevin Campbell and Andrea Silenzi - neither of whom can make the first team. The rest is helping to pay off Forest's multi-million pound debt. However, each tie realises £500,000 and the same amount is in limbo awaiting the Premier League's ruling on Collymore's claim to a cut of his transfer fee.

Should Forest draw the likes of Milan the emphasis, once more, is likely to be on defence. It is almost eight hours since they conceded a goal in Europe and Cooper said: "The way we play has been ideally suited to it. Teams have put us under a lot of pressure but we do not allow them to get behind us because we play fairly deep. They can play some nice football but they cannot play one-two behind us. We are like everyone else, we would love to win three or four, but it does not matter in the end as long as you get through."

Forest's progress has already helped Steve Stone enter the England squad and it may yet earn Cooper a recall. The central defender played two Umbro Cup matches during which England conceded six goals. On both occasions the back four was experimental and it showed.

Cooper said: "You can look at it from that point of view but I am sure there is many an established international who came in because of injuries and took his chance. I thought I did reasonably well and Terry Venables did say players from teams who stayed in Europe would come to the forefront of his thoughts. I would love to be in next summer's championships."

## United remodel their theatre of dreams

There is one thing that you can be sure of when you talk about Old Trafford: it is going to end in tiers. Three to be precise, a massive 26,000 seats monument to the enduring popularity of Manchester United.

Walk into the ground and the sheer size of the thing hits you. Even in an age where the breath is regularly taken away by spectator areas such as at Elland Road, Anfield and St James' Park, this is a gargantuan structure, reaching high into the old Trafford Park docklands sky.

It dominates the theatre of dreams. At 3,600 tons looming twice the size of the existing structures - and Old Trafford was hardly a tin-pot shambles with rickety old sheds to stand under to start with. When it is complete - and the estimates are for April - some 55,300 people will be creating a noise redolent of the terrace era in support of Eric Cantona and co.

"Even though I've seen the drawings and been involved throughout the planning stages, it surprises even me," Martin Edwards, United's chief executive, said about the stand that will be the biggest in Britain. "It's an impressive structure."

So is the speed with which the North Stand is being erected. Work began only in June and by last Saturday's match against Chelsea, the bottom tier - the equivalent of the previous cantilever stand built for the 1966 World Cup - was occupied for the first time.

Already the capacity is nudging the "sorry, no more seats" numbers of last year and the undertaking to have at least that number ready for the European Championship has been completed six months ahead of schedule.

Six months after work began, they are already allowing fans into Old Trafford's new super structure. Guy Hodgson reports

pleted six months ahead of schedule.

"The simple problem was of demand," Edwards continued. "We had a beautiful concentric ground with all the stands the same size, but we couldn't fit in everyone who wanted to watch Manchester United. We had 123,000 members last year, most of whom wanted to come

to Old Trafford several times a season. With a capacity of little more than 43,000, it meant we were turning thousands of people away. In those circumstances, the economics dictated we couldn't let the shape of the ground dictate what we did."

Ah, the economics. United have been accused of worrying

more about pennies in the till than goals in the net, but they can hardly be accused of stinginess. The North Stand is going to cost around £19m, which when you include the £9m to buy the land it stands on makes the total cost more than £1,000 a seat.

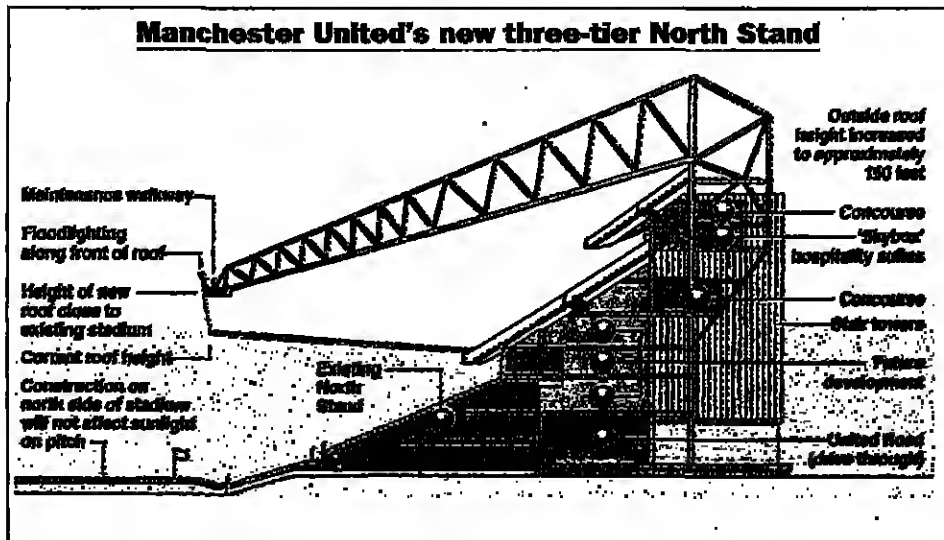
"We've estimated we are going to need to fill Old Trafford 100 times before the stand is paid for, which means five seasons if we're lucky," Edwards said. "We're usually close to capacity for League games, but we don't always sell out for Coca-Cola Cup ties and European matches."

The stand will also provide the centre-piece for events beyond United's matches, including European club finals. It would be natural to host more FA Cup semi-finals there, too, while rugby league, which

already uses the ground for internationals, will scarcely be deterred by an increase of 12,000 in potential ticket sales. Indeed, the single biggest reason why the new stadium is unlikely to be built in the east of the city is rising on the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal.

How big can Old Trafford get? Peter Beatty, joint managing director of Hiltone Laurie, the construction consultants for the North Stand, believes that is a matter of technological advance and Manchester United's determination. "At the moment, the next stand most capable of expansion is the old Stretford End," he said, "but that was rebuilt only a couple of years ago and the club is unlikely to want to knock it down for a few years yet."

A railway line runs to the south, while police would be loath to let United expand to the east on to what is the main concourse into the stadium. "As structural engineers, we regard these problems as a challenge," Beatty said. "They said it wouldn't be possible to build a stand on the north side because of an access road, but we've managed it. In fact, it's a matter of some pride that the building has gone on without that road ever having to close."



### Capacity of Premier League grounds

Premier League Club	Capacity	Capacity of largest stand
Manchester United	55,000* approx	North Stand: 26,000 approx
Aston Villa	25,000	Hothe End: 13,500 approx
Leeds United	25,000	East Stand: 14,900
Liverpool	41,352	The Kop: 12,681
Arsenal	38,755	North Bank: 12,400
Newcastle United	26,610	Exhibition Stand: 11,955
Chelsea	31,554	East Stand: 11,328
Sheffield Wednesday	26,000 (40,000)*	Spon Kop: 11,000
Manchester City	32,000	The Rippes: 11,000
Middlesbrough	30,000	East Stand: 10,315
Nottingham Forest	30,500	Executive Stand: 10,037
Tottenham Hotspur	33,000	East Stand: 10,000
Blackburn Rovers	31,367	Jack Walker Stand: 11,000
Wimbledon	26,000	Homesdale Road Stand: 8,500
West Ham United	26,014	West Stand: 8,000
Everton	40,000 approx	Gwladys St Terrace: 8,000
Southampton	15,000	West Stand: approx 8,500
Coventry	23,500	West Stand: approx 6,000
Queen's Park Rangers	19,000	Elmfield Road Stand: 4,842
Bolton Wanderers	22,616	Manchester Rd Stand: 3,520

\* on completion of work

## Magic moments in diaries of the unexpected

Everything is now geared towards 25 December, yet it is the events of 25 January that resonate through the pages of the year's most riveting football reads.

Eric Cantona did not, alas, keep a diary giving his version of that fateful night at Crystal Palace or its aftermath. Alex Ferguson did, and *A Year in the Life* (Virgin, £12.99) reveals how the Manchester United manager was torn between the instinct to defend Cantona and a realisation that he was indefensible.

Amazingly, Ferguson was still unsure what had happened when he arrived home to learn that Cantona had "karate-kicked the guy". Too sick at heart to watch a recording, he went to bed, but could not sleep. "At 5.25am I got up and put the video on. I couldn't believe what I saw."

It is testimony to Ferguson's candour and the editing skills of Peter Ball that the tempo does not falter either side of Selhurst Park. The inside story of Andy Cole's £7m signing is fascinating - Ferguson then considered him better value

than Les Ferdinand - while he pulls no punches about Blackburn's shortcomings.

The extent to which *Affaire Cantona* dominated a season harking with big stories is evident from another diary, by the Charlton striker Garry Nelson. Amid the unexpected delights of *Left Foot Forward: A Year in the Life of a Journeyman Footballer* (Headline, £12.99), is this initial reaction: "Just when I thought I was safe to go to parties again and say I'm a footballer..."

Fast forward to March. Nelson is pole-axed at Bristol City and is carried off in agony. "A City fan leaned out of the crowd, 'That's your career over, you bastard,' he crowed. Thoughts strayed to Cantona. If only he'd been carrying the stretcher, I'd have paid all his fines for him if, dropping me like a hot potato, he'd vaulted the hoarding..."

Karren Brady's *Brady Plays the Blues* (Pavilion, £14.99) is billed as the diary of Birmingham's mould-breaking managing director. Although one always has a sense of events

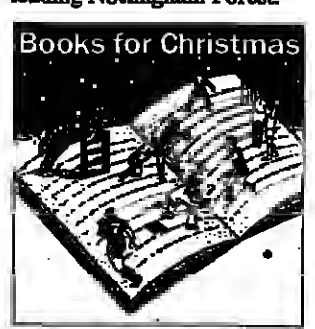
being viewed with hindsight, it contains entertaining insights into the odd trio of Brady, David Sullivan and Barry Fry.

At one point, Fry tells a player Sullivan wants him out. Brady insists the owner said no such thing, forcing the manager to backtrack. Later, she turns to Fry saying: "I can't believe you did that." The Arthur Daley of football replies: "Yeah, Kazza, it was a bit of a kick in the bollocks, wasn't it?"

Which brings us back to a certain Frenchman. Ian Ridley's *Cantona: The Red and the Black* (Gollancz, £14.99) is an intelligent and critical study of a life and a career. The book is "unauthorised" and better for it. Ridley shedding far more light on the complex character he calls "part Rambo, part Rimbaud" than Cantona did in his self-justifying autobiography.

Gary McAllister stays on the fence about Cantona's time at Leeds in *Captain's Log* (Mainstream, £14.99). The Scotland skipper does, however, quote one manager (sadly anonymous)

who derided Cantona as "a poor man's Joe Jordan". He is also more forthcoming about how, but for Brian Clough's belated intervention, he might now be leading Nottingham Forest.



As a study of a folk hero, David Instone's *The Bully Years* (Thomas Publications, £8.99) is short on controversy (apart from Steve Bull's ongoing feud with Leicester's Steve Walsh) but long on goals. All the 250-plus Bull has scored for Wolves are described, and it is a tribute to the author that he turns so many knock-ins into a dramatic literary

Vying with the diary for format of the year is the oral history, *Kicking & Screaming*, by Rogan Taylor and Andrew Ward (Robson, £16.95), is recommended especially to anyone who forgot to video the BBC2 series while watching *Cracker*. Memories and myths trace a national obsession from the days when a pair of boots had to last years through the Brylcreem Boys to today's millionaire players and their agents.

Stephen Walsh's *Voices of the Old Firm* (Mainstream, £14.99) performs a similar role in recording eye-witness accounts, laced with acid Glaswegian wit, of the past 50 years of Rangers and Celtic. It is a tale of devotion, rivalry and bigotry - and that's just the players.

Tom Watt must also have been up to his spectacles in interview tapes. Curiously, *A Passion for the Game: Real Lives in Football* (Mainstream, £14.99) coaxes more "real" experience from stewards, kit men and press-box assistants than from

the likes of Ron Atkinson and Robert Chase.

My favourite involves the PA announcer at Liverpool. Annoyed by the Tammy man who gave details of a car to be moved as Tommy Smith was about to take a penalty, George Sephton wrote in pleading "Gissajob". They did, but he froze at his first game.

"All my mates are down there in the crowd. I've either got to get on and do this or pack my bags and emigrate." He survived, and is still going strong, but the next day: "I was in my car, driving through Bootle, and I stopped and just cried for 20 minutes. My nervous system was shredded."

As years go by, the heavy-weight club histories get bigger and better. No one does nostalgia as expertly as Breddon, whose latest batch include books on Blackburn, Bolton, Derby (a pictorial record) and a timely pean to Middlesbrough's past, *Ayresome Park Memories*, by Eric Paylor and John Wilson (all £14.99). Meanwhile, their

*Breddon Book of Scottish Football Records* (£14.99), edited by Gordon Smailes, is a must for tartan anarchists.

Hamlyn are market leaders in the "official" illustrated homage. An impressive autumn collection features updated editions on Arsenal, Liverpool, Manchester United and Tottenham, plus a new volume on Celtic (all £16.99).

As arguably the fattest and most expensive tome ever, *A Football Compendium* (British Library, £60) is a Gazza among reference works. Compiled by Peter J Seddon, its 5,000 entries detail everything written or recorded about the game in these islands since 1863. For example, there have been 45 books on Arsenal, nine on George Best and one on Albanian footy. One for completists.

Duncan Chilcott's *Hamlyn Guide to Football Collectables* (£12.99) may have a similar appeal. An illustrated buyers' guide to memorabilia, it is a treasure trove of shirts, caps, trophies, medals, works of art, records, books, stamps, programmes, cigarette cards et al. What price Cantona's old Bruce Lee posters?



## Football

RUPERT METCALF

Ferguson sat out one match for Rangers before the ban was put on hold pending the court hearing. After joining Everton last season, he played in the first two matches of this term before needing a hernia operation. Everton's last four

Birmingham expect to complete the ~~transfer~~ signing of Barcelona's Danish striker, Ronnie Ekeland, today, while one deal to go through yesterday saw Bolton Wanderers buy the Plymouth Argyle midfielder Wayne Burnett, who has been on loan at Brandon Park for two months, for £100,000.



## Tennis

Sampras, who guided the United States to their Davis Cup triumph last weekend despite an attack of cramp, can increase his earnings in the world's richest tennis event to \$2.12m by winning the cup.

There are no rankings points at stake at the Munich tournament, which brings together the 16 best performers from the four Grand Slams – Wimbledon and the US, French and Australian Opens.

But the American admitted afterwards that he had no major expectations from the tournament

In the quarter-finals, Sampras will play another big server, Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia. The American Todd Martin booked his place in the quarter-finals with a 7-6, 6-4 victory over Spain's former French Open champion, Sergi Bruguera.

## Basketball

By the narrowest of margins, 27-26, the referees voted on Monday to accept a contract offer from the league that was, however, less lucrative than what they had wanted. Gone will be the replacement officials, most of whom came from the Continental Basketball Association. Most players are pleased.

Under the five-year agreement, first-year referees would make \$75,000 (\$50,000) this year and \$99,000 in the final year of the deal, not including money for play-offs. Veteran officials would be paid \$211,000 this year and \$278,000 in the final year. The league has claimed the

"His Spurs and David Robinson have come to an agreement on a multi-year contract—a new multi-year contract—that allows David Robinson to be a Spur for life," the Spurs' general manager, Gregg Popovich, said. He would not reveal terms of the agreements, but he did confirm that as long as Robinson played in the NBA it would be for the Spurs.

Robinson, 30, in his seventh NBA season, last year was the league's Most Valuable Player Award winner.

## Rugby League

Widnes player, is owed money and said: "Widnes haven't honoured my contract and I'm not prepared to accept the situation any longer. I have played my last match for them."

Hadley, who is recovering from a knee injury, joined Widnes from Salford three years ago and has been linked with a return to his old club at the age of 32. But he says that he has had no approaches and may retire.

has been passed in to return for St Helens in their legal Trophy quarter-final against Halifax on Sunday. Owners have told Welsh clubs they are wasting their time trying to entice Gibbs, who replaces the cup-tied Paul Wewale, back to union. The Western Samoan captain, John Chester, will miss that match and could be out until the new year after breaking his thumb.

Kevin Ellis, yet another Welshman, has offered his services to his former club,

The former Castleford coach, Darryl Van de Velde, has arrived from Australia to take charge of his new club, Huddersfield, for the first time against Whitehaven on Sunday. Van de Velde has resigned as chief executive of the South Queensland Crushers to take up the post.

Wigan have been invited to take part in Bristol rugby union club's sevens next May.

## Skidding

The Oreiller-Killy piste, on which the skiers will have to run two legs on Saturday, seemed to favour heavyweights since Norway's Atle Skaardal, who is stocky, had the second best time of 1:10.65 ahead of Austria's Roland Assinger. He is aiming to emulate his brother, Armin, who won on the course last year.

## Hendry survives early scare

### Stephen

Hendry lost three of the first four frames and admitted: "I couldn't afford to let Tony get any further ahead. It was vital for me to win the fifth frame." That is exactly what the newly crowned UK champion did, and breaks of 79, 72 and 56 carried him through to the last

Hendry said later: "I'm finding it difficult to get psyched up for this tournament as I was in the UK championship. However, I had to slow down the pace to keep Tony away from the table for long periods. He became very nervous because of it."

## England A in an awkward situation

## Cricket

However, the weather-affected second "Test" in Rawalpindi has left a clutch of other players demanding another opportunity in Peshawar to show what they can do. Batting places, in particular, will be at a premium with Jason Pooley and Anthony McGrath both having had just one innings each so far in the

**Soccer**  
Millwall have signed Tim Carter on a free transfer from Oxford United. The 28-year-old goalkeeper, who was at The Den for two years until last summer, will cover for the American, Kasey Keller, who flies to the United States for a tournament in January.

[illegible]

ough action was promised yesterday by Jim Sakonkari, who has been appointed Britain's Olympic team coach to take the squad through the 1996 games regionally in Savannah and beyond. Rod Coleman becomes Olympic team manager.

Two England teams, one from the south and the other representing the east, will contest the Rolex Commodore's Cup next year, in which three boat teams of amateurs compete in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will also have two teams each.

**table tennis**  
Jill Parker, the 41-year-old former European champion, will come out of retirement to lead England's women against Germany at Hastings on Tuesday. For the men's European League match against Germany on the same night, Alex Perry of Devon and Andy Eden of Lancashire have been drafted into the squad, replacing Bradley Eaton.

**Tennis**  
Britain's Clare Wood was knocked out in the second round of the Challenge event in Pans yesterday, beaten 4-6, 6-3 by the American qualifier, gela Lettore.

**GRAND SLAM TOURNAMENT (Munich, First round: T Martin (USA) bt S Bruguera 7-6 8-4; P Sampras (USA) bt P McEnroe 7-1 7-6.**

Weather conditions have already caused the cancellation of races in Tignes, France, as well as Lake Louise. With the season barely under way, the women are already four races behind schedule.

## Peter Graf's personal appeal

## Jenn's

Several written requests for release from jail have been rejected since Peter Graf was arrested on 3 August after a judge's decision that there was a risk of his fleeing to avoid prosecution. Peter Graf has not been charged, but is being investigated on suspicion of arranging to pay too little tax on

Peter Wechsung, the chief prosecutor, said that Peter Graf filed a request yesterday saying he wanted to give an extensive explanation of his position. Steffi Graf also remains under investigation in the case, as does the family tax adviser, Joachim Eckardt, who was arrested in September, and is also being treated as being at risk of fleeing. Steffi Graf has already deposited DM20m (£9m) to cover taxes investigators believe may have been evaded.

The all-rounders Ronnie Barani and Craig White have also had little opportunity with either bat or ball - and with the captain, Nasser Hussain sure to play, there is pressure on the selectors to leave out either Jason Gallian or Nick Knight in an effort to find room for others.

On the bowling side, Warwickshire's Tim Munton will definitely sit on the sidelines in Peshawar, whatever the pitch conditions there, which will give the Sussex fast bowler Ed Giddins another deserved opportunity.

[illegible]

**TITLEWOODS:** Treble chance: 24pts £43.05, 20 draws £34.30, 22 £2.60. Four draws: £40.10 homes £49.25. Five averages £38.00.

**KNONKS:** Treble chance: 24pts £248.45, £15.80. 10 homes £43.00. Five averages £4.56.

**ITERS:** Treble chance: 24pts £83.15, 23 £1.10, Four draws £75.40. Eight homes £6.60. Four averages £793.20. Easy ch £5.40. Lucky numbers 18 14 38 33 9 34. Odds galore £1.70.

**SALES:** Treble chance: 24pts £38.20, £2.30. Four draws £2.80. Eight homes £1.70. Five averages £163.30.

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## SPORT

## Rowell forced to undertake drastic surgery

Steve Bale

Rugby Union Correspondent

Two new caps, four changes of personnel and another two of position in the team named last night to face Western Samoa at Twickenham on Saturday week amount to drastic surgery by recent England standards – more akin, in fact, to the bad old days of the Eighties than the stability which has served so well in the Nineties.

Such, then, is the difficulty caused to Jack Rowell, whose management has been mainly frustration, by his proper insistence that England find the means to play a rugby of dynamic movement rather than the attrition that likewise had served them so well. Last month's defeat by South Africa appears to have exploded a few more theories.

One is that Mike Catt is the one to exploit the threequarter resources so often left under-exploited, at any rate for the time being. "We have not given up on Mike Catt at outside-half," Rowell suggested when the announcement was made before England trained at Marlow.

Catt reverts – one might say is relegated – to full-back to accommodate Paul Grayson in half-back unison with his Northampton partner, Matthew Dawson. Lawrence Dallaglio is the third newcomer, having impressed on his brief debut as a replacement blind-side flanker against the Springboks, he will play on the open side where he has now undertaken to play for Wasps.

Graham Rowntree's claim to be loose-head prop could no



## England squad

(v Western Samoa at Twickenham on 16 December)  
 M Catt (Bath); D Hopley (Wasps); J Guscott (Bath);  
 W Carling (Harlequins, capt); R Underwood (Leicester);  
 P Grayson, M Dawson (Northampton); G Rowntree (Leicester); M Regan (Bristol); J Leonard (Harlequins); M Jellison (Leicester); M Bayfield, T Rodger (Northampton); S Gerrie (Bath); L Dallaglio (Wasps); Replacement: J Callard, P de Giovanni (Bath); K Bradshaw (Bristol); V Ugochi, G Dawe, A Robinson (Bath).

longer be withstood, leaving the choice at tight head between moving Jason Leonard into his Lions position or Victor Ugochi staying put. After the strictures to which Rowell subjected Ugochi before the South Africa match, this was not too hard a choice, however: reluctant Leonard may be in the knowledge that on Sunday week his back will be as stiff as a board.

Quite apart from the general uncertainty about how a new-look – though, according to Rowell, not experimental – team will go, there remains one specific uncertainty. After two yellow cards, Mark Regan is due before the Gloucestershire disciplinary committee on Tuesday; if, as is probable, he is suspended Graham Dawe will come in for his fifth cap at hooker.

Grayson is a 24-year-old Lancastrian, who has been playing rugby only six years and was once a semi-professional footballer with Accrington Stanley. He played himself into this team with his performance for the Midlands against the Samoans last Saturday. His accurate place-kicking was critical in the decision to discard Jonathan Callard, though Grayson would never have been selected without his perceived capacity to launch a back line. Curiously, Grayson was not

known as a running outside-half until Northampton went into the Second Division this season and started heating everyone by 50 points. On the contrary: he first came to public attention by kicking Bath to a famous cup defeat by Waterloo three years ago and did little to dispel the negative impression after he subsequently became a Saint.

Dawson, on the other hand, demonstrated his pedigree from the moment he came into the Northampton side, even when he was having to play out of position in the centre. Rowell said that he would probably have displaced Kyran Brackee whatever had happened when Samoa played the Midlands – in which case his exquisite personal contribution provided the most handsome endorsement the manager could have wished.

In the pack, Rodber's mediocre showing before he departed the Springbok Test implied he was the one under pressure from Dallaglio but as soon as he was restored to fitness and then form – again against the Samoans for the Midlands – the attention shifted to Andy Robinson, mercilessly relegated to the bench (along with the other three discards) after winning his first cap in six years.



Net working: England's John Crawley practises at Paarl yesterday in preparation for the third test

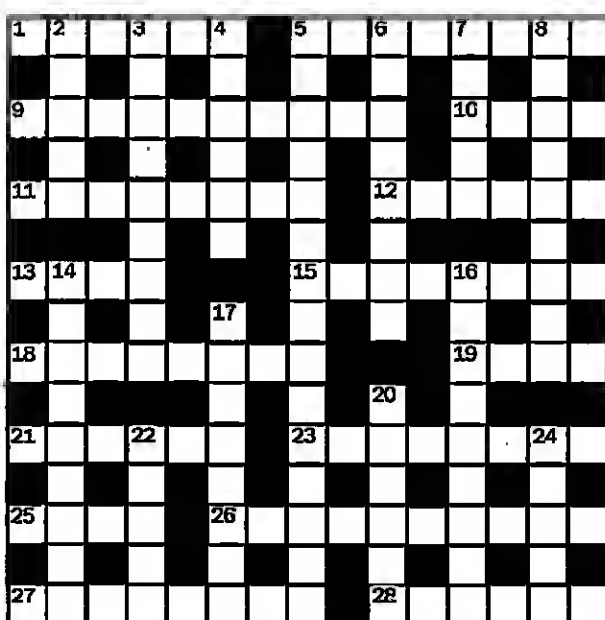
Photograph: Graham Chadwick/Allsport

## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 2851, Thursday 7 December

By Spynus

Wednesday's Solution



IMPEDIMENT STUO  
 NO I A O R R  
 FALLS PANTOMIME  
 L E I N V O  
 LOLOM EASYGOING  
 G S L I A E  
 HOTWATERGOTTIE  
 T R A E H  
 TALKOFFTHEOEVIL  
 I I  
 STRANGE NORMA  
 S P U O V A G S  
 APOLOGIST PLAMA  
 I R N O H L T N  
 NOTS MERSYREAT

## ACROSS

- 1 Firm in which training is given priority? (6)
- 5 Young seafarer unforthcoming about quantity of wine sailor's carrying (5-3)
- 9 Runner initially noticing several people engaged in watersports (4-6)
- 10 Polish fellow regarded as an expert (4)
- 11 Popular party fast becoming lackadaisical (8)
- 12 Primate's embargo receiving loud expression of disapproval (6)
- 13 Old priests seen in Morocco by serviceman (4)
- 15 Offering to repair boot with nail (8)
- 18 Kidnapped is full of vigour (8)
- 19 A few lies in Arabic

## DOWN

- 2 Fascinated by army range (5)
- 3 Broad line possibly made by shoulder-belt (9)
- 4 English side supported by bootigan was eliminated (6)
- 5 Dressers having underwear entrusted to them? (6, 2, 7)
- 6 Station dance is something of a game (8)
- 7 Plutocrat returning from abroad turned up in British resort (5)
- 8 Not fit to watch anything but black-and-white films? (3, 6)
- 14 Instrument producing very high notes? (9)
- 16 Spinner's trajectory described as excellent (3-6)
- 17 Income evoking strong resentment (8)
- 20 Celt getting excited about very big secret (6)
- 22 Progressive lacking power? (2, 3)
- 24 Cancel arrangement for girl to come over mid-July (5)

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## Brighton stay put for another year

## Football

Brighton have been told that they can remain at the Goldstone Ground for an extra year, following talks between the local council and the development firm buying the stadium. The Seagulls, who are selling their home of 93 years to help to pay off £6m-worth of debts, were due to move out in June next year.

The stay of execution until

June 1997 follows negotiations between Hove Council and Chartwell Development Properties Limited, who plan to build a store after levelling the Goldstone site.

Hove's Council leader, Ivor Caplin, announced the reprieve yesterday but he was nevertheless fiercely critical of the club's decision to move from the Goldstone at all. "When the present owners get a return of their funds from the sale of the ground they could give the club

back, via the local council, to local people to run – people who will care about our community and not sell it for any reason," he said.

Brighton's plan was to share Portsmouth's Fratton Park ground next season but that idea has received a cool reception from the Football League, which wants to be satisfied the Seagulls have a new stadium in the pipeline to return to. Caplin shares that view and said: "If the club ends up play-

ing at Portsmouth, it will be better tolerated as long as supporters know there is going to be a new ground to move back to."

Caplin added that the results of a specially commissioned study that was set up to identify the best site for a new ground would be known before Christmas.

The news that Brighton can stay at the Goldstone for an extra year was greeted enthusiastically by the club's chief

executive, David Bellotti, last night. "When we met Hove Council and representatives from Chartwell three weeks ago, we were hopeful of getting another year at the Goldstone and it's wonderful news. Now all our efforts will go into identifying the land for our new stadium."

Bellotti promised that Brighton would be lodging a planning application as soon as possible. United's new dream, page 30

## Showdown at the Bridge

The boardroom showdown between Chelsea rivals Ken Bates and Matthew Harding is unlikely to resolve their bitter power struggle this morning.

Harding, the Stamford Bridge landlord, is determined to force chairman Bates to climb down over his enforced exile from the directors' box.

The multi-millionaire will also seek to block plans for the new South Stand – centred around a hotel development – and Harding looks set to gain the backing of his takeover intent.

But that has not prevented a virulent media battle, with Bates accusing Harding of em-

ploying a "dirty" tactic to get the club's parent company, as a declaration of his takeover intent.

But that has not prevented a virulent media battle, with Bates accusing Harding of em-

ploying a "dirty" tactic to get the club's parent company, as a declaration of his takeover intent.

Waged against a background of "mystery" shareholders, appeals to the fans and even tales of bugging, the dispute has hit the dressing-room, with the Chelsea manager, Glenn Hoddle, reportedly recruited to the Harding camp and Bates allegedly lining up the disgraced and exiled former Arsenal manager, George Graham, as his eventual successor.

Roy Evans yesterday paid tribute to forgotten man Nigel Clough as he prepares to come out of the shadows to answer a Liverpool selection crisis.

The former England player looks certain to start against Bolton on Saturday because of international call-ups as well as injuries to Neil Ruddock and Ian Rush. Jason McAteer, Phil Babb and Mark Kennedy are all wanted by the Republic of Ireland for next week's European Championship play-off against the Netherlands at Anfield.

It gives Clough, signed from Nottingham Forest two years ago, his first start in the league

since the final game of last season, as Liverpool bid to end a seven-match run without a win.

"I can't believe no one has made an offer for Nigel. He is a class player. He has never let anyone down when he has been in our team," the Liverpool manager said. "Nigel has had a bad time and it's been difficult for him, but now he has kicked-started himself again and got himself back in the picture."

Evans added: "He is a very honest lad and he gets on with his job. Now we find ourselves in a position with places up for grabs. It's amazing how things can change in football."

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